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SEPTEMBER 2003 NO. 59

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fresh summer ingredients

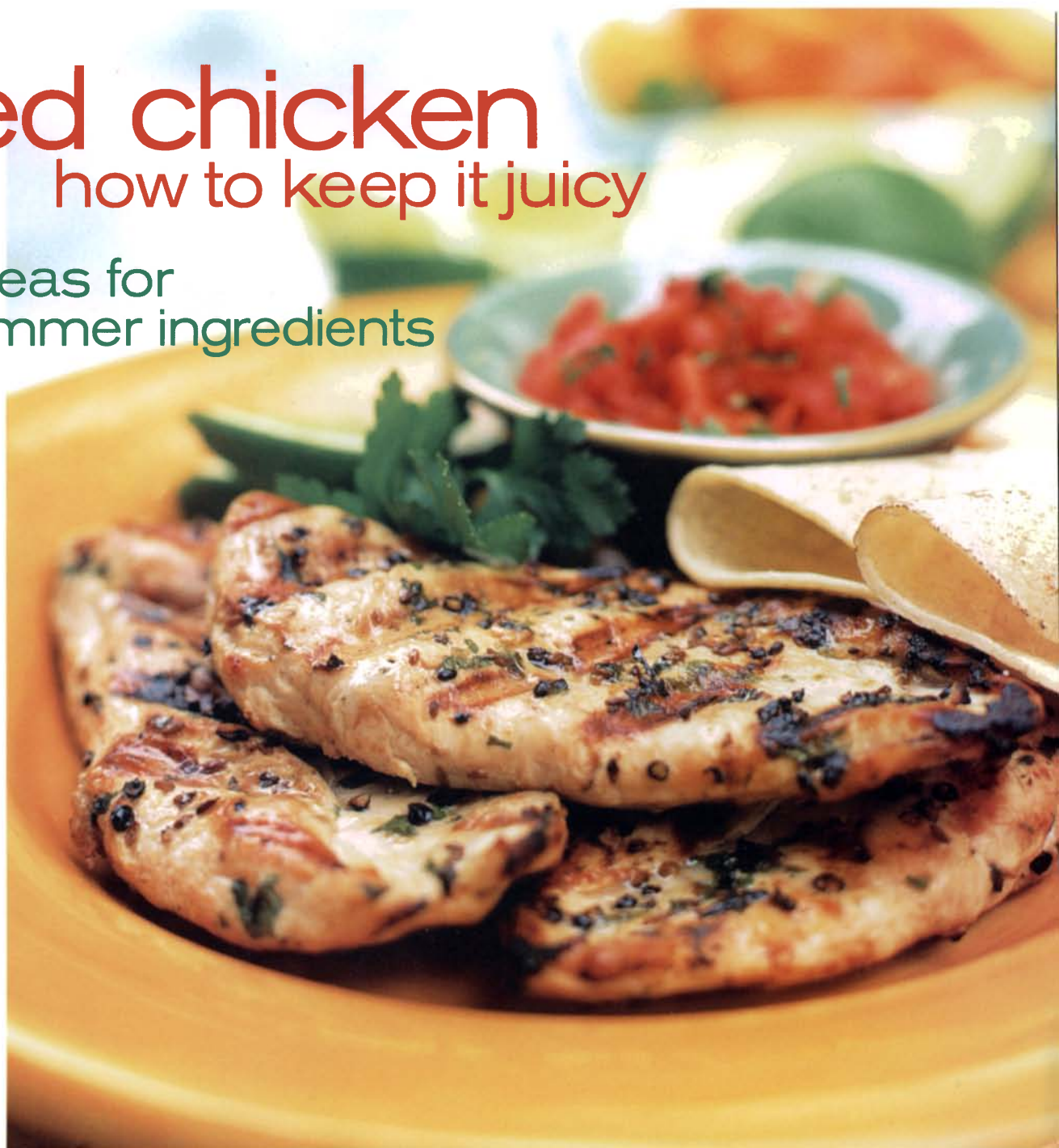
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Chef Michael DeGeorgio
Executive Chef
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Rigatoni with Eggplant & Spicy Peppers

Ingredients (serves four)

- 4 cloves of garlic, cracked
- 4 shallots
- 4 oz. Colavita Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 18 oz. canned plum tomatoes
- 1/2 cup chicken broth
- Salt, pepper, oregano, red pepper and fresh basil to taste
- 4 Italian hot finger peppers, sliced and cut
- 3 whole eggplants, sliced 3/4 inch thick
- 1/2 cup Parmigiano Reggiano cheese, grated
- 1 lb. Colavita Rigatoni

1. In a heavy sauté pan, sauté the garlic and shallots in 2 oz. extra virgin olive oil until golden brown. Add in the broth and the tomatoes. Bring to a boil and season with salt, pepper, oregano, red pepper and fresh basil. Simmer for 20 minutes. Puree sauce through a food mill.
2. Season the eggplant with salt and pepper and drizzle with extra virgin olive oil. Grill on a barbecue or broiler until golden brown on both sides and tender. Remove from broiler and cut into 1-inch cubes. Sprinkle well with the parmigiano reggiano grated cheese and put back into the broiler to toast the cheese. Remove and set aside.
3. Sauté the sliced hot peppers in extra virgin olive oil until golden brown. Add into the sauce.
4. Cook the pasta until al dente. Toss the pasta in the sauce with half of the toasted eggplant, parmigiano cheese and fresh basil.
5. Plate the pasta and top with the rest of the toasted eggplant.

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82C

Quick & Delicious



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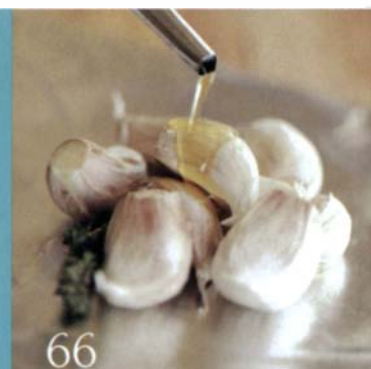
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Hot nights, bold flavors

It's no accident that we have a lot of exciting flavors in this issue; when it's hot outside, there's something incredibly refreshing about an infusion of fresh herbs, a zesty vinaigrette, a kick of ginger or the tangy juice of a perfectly ripe tomato. So be bold and serve your friends and family a mix of flavors, textures, and even temperatures. Don't even worry too much about what "goes" together (although we can't resist making a few suggestions below)—summer's a great time to experiment. Be sure to check the yield of each recipe before you start cooking; you might have to double or triple a recipe for a party.

Tex-Mex Dinner

Grill the shrimp, marinate the chicken, and make the vinaigrette ahead of time. Rinse and drain the black beans well before folding them with the vinaigrette.

Grilled Shrimp "Margarita" with Avocados & Garden Tomatoes, p. 45

Tex-Mex Chicken Under a Brick, p. 36, served with salsa and warmed flour tortillas

Black beans (use a 28-ounce can to serve six people) tossed with Spicy Ginger-Lime-Garlic Vinaigrette, p. 60

Sangria Granita, p. 47

Three Ideas for Weeknight Entertaining

Try these ideas out when a few friends are coming over for a midweek get-together. If you have time to plan ahead, any of the granitas on p. 47 would make a nice light dessert—or try the Vanilla & Ginger Roasted Plum Compote on p. 82C, since you can assemble it quickly and cook it during dinner.

Hearts of romaine tossed with Caesar-Style Vinaigrette, p. 60

Risotto with Corn, Tomatoes & Basil, p. 82C

Spiced Salmon with Yellow Peppers, p. 82C

Chickpea, Carrot & Parsley Salad, p. 82C

Salt & Pepper Crusted Shrimp with Two Dipping Sauces, p. 43

Tomato, Chive & Pine Nut Salad with Gorgonzola Toasts, p. 41

Three Great Dinner Menus

Summer Evening Buffet

The chicken takes just a couple of minutes to grill, so pound it out ahead of time, keep it refrigerated, and cook it when you have the rest of the buffet assembled.

Prosciutto with Marinated Melon, p. 52

Roasted Eggplant, p. 16, with Mellow Garlic & Basil Vinaigrette, p. 60

Cherry Tomato Bread Salad with Basil & Fresh Mozzarella, p. 38

Herbed Grilled Chicken, p. 35

Peach Cake with Apricot & Vanilla Glaze, p. 62

Mostly Mediterranean Dinner

Make the soup and the granita a day ahead so they have time to chill and freeze. The lamb skewers and green bean salad come together in about an hour.

Cucumber-Yogurt Soup with Avocado, p. 56

Lamb Skewers with Green Olive & Mint Sauce, p. 82C, served with couscous

Tomato & Fresh Green Bean Salad with Crisp Prosciutto, p. 40

Strawberry-Balsamic Granita, p. 47

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from the editor

Coming up: A special edition of Quick & Delicious recipes

Summer is always busy at *Fine Cooking* because we work on fall issues as well as on issues for next summer, so we can test recipes with in-season produce, and so our photo shoots can capture the feeling of real summer sun-drenched locations.

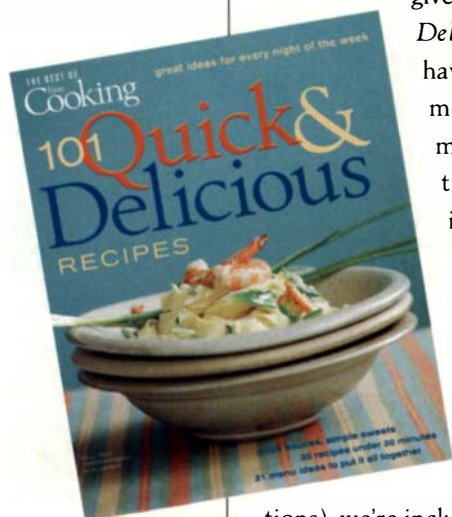
This year, we've got even more on our plates than usual—we're publishing our first "Best of *Fine Cooking*" special edition. It's kind of a "bookazine," with extra-heavy covers and pages to give it a real collector's feel. It's called *101 Quick & Delicious Recipes*, and while many of the recipes have appeared in our Quick & Delicious department, many others are from throughout the magazine, all under 45 minutes and all great for the time-pressed cook who still wants to make interesting, from-scratch meals.

These recipes were chosen from the whole ten years of *Fine Cooking*, so unless you're a charter subscriber, many will be new to you. But even for the long-time reader, the convenient format and "best" selection make this special edition a great resource.

Besides the 101 recipes (plus some variations), we're including menu ideas, a handy recipe index, nutritional information for every recipe, and of course gorgeous photography throughout. The best way to buy the special edition—it isn't part of the regular subscription—is to go to your local newsstand; the price is \$6.95. If that's not convenient, we'll be happy to send you one. To order your copy, call toll-free (866) 469-0746 (there will be a postage and handling fee).

Something else new this summer: *Fine Cooking* and Sur La Table, along with KitchenAid, are sponsoring the "Shop with a Chef" cooking classes every Saturday at the Ferry Plaza Farmers' Market in San Francisco, which has just reopened in and around the fabulously renovated Ferry Building. Visit www.ferryplazafarmersmarket.com for information on the market and the classes. I spent a few hours there on a recent trip, and it was very exciting to see so many of the folks we've featured on our back cover over the years. Closer to home, be sure to seek out farmstands and farmers' markets this summer—your recipes will be that much more delicious.

—Martha Holmberg,
publisher/editor in chief



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Lush basil all summer

I'd like to respond to the question about basil going to seed (*Fine Cooking* # 58, p. 24). I have been a mostly organic gardener for years. I say mostly because the exception I make is for basil. I like to grow it in pots rather than in the ground for various reasons, like splash from rain and pests, but the best reason is that with a little pinching and weak, weekly fertilization with Miracid (or some acid fertilizer)—which promotes leafing out rather than blooming—I have full, lush basil all summer.

—Michael Dillon,
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

#1 ice cream is nationwide

I'm curious about the Edy's Dreamery that was rated the best vanilla ice cream by your tasting panel (*Fine Cooking* #58, p. 78). In northern California at least, Edy's is known as Dreyer's; the packaging is otherwise identical. I wondered if you know in which parts of the country it is sold as Edy's, and in which parts it is sold as Dreyer's.

—Jim Mehl, Los Gatos, California

Editors' reply: Thanks for bringing this labeling difference to our attention. Dreyer's and Edy's are the same, with Dreyer's being distributed throughout the western regions of the United States, including Texas. For a color-coded map showing which states carry Edy's and which carry Dreyer's, go to www.dreyersinc.com/partnering/distribution.asp.

Good Cheddar from the grocery store

Thanks for the informative report on Cheddar (*Fine Cooking* #58, p. 76). Having sampled an extensive array myself, I wanted to comment that my local gro-

cery (in Philadelphia) has a great store-brand Cheddar. "Pathmark Sharp Cheddar" is aged six months, it has a wonderful bite and decent crumble, and it costs \$3.10 for 7 ounces. A terrific find for a Cheddar lover, and a real step up from some of the national brands.

—Christin Ellingsworth, via e-mail

A date for the party

I just got my issue, and as always, it starts me thinking of my next dinner party with friends.

I thought you might enjoy an easy and quick appetizer I made for my last dinner party. It's my attempt to recreate something I had one afternoon at the Plaza Hotel in Madrid, a nibble to go with a nice sherry. And it couldn't be simpler.

Wrap a pitted date (I use the large, sweet medjools) with bacon, skewer it on a toothpick and grill it over moderate heat, turning it over to finish the bacon all around the date. The date comes out warm, sweeter, and softer, while the bacon adds the smokiness and chewiness to offset it. It was the one thing my dinner guests asked about, and no one could believe that's all there was to it.

—Larry Bush, via e-mail

Thickening a stir-fry

I greatly enjoyed Robert Danhi's article on stir-frying in *Fine Cooking* #58. I found his guidelines for the sizes to cut various vegetables especially useful. I noticed, however, that he consis-

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tently adds the thickener (in his case, cornstarch) to the sauce. One trick I use when stir-frying is to use the thickener (in my case, flour) to coat the meat before frying it. I'm not talking about enough to bread it; I use just a little more than I would use to simply thicken the sauce. I find that the extra browning of the flour that happens when the meat is cooked enhances the flavor of the finished stir-fry, as well as thickens the sauce nicely when the liquids are added at the end.

—Jennifer Davis, via e-mail

She loves her oven

I read the article on convection ovens that was on your Web site (www.finecooking.com). I have the DCS double convection oven, and it is fabulous.

My oven has a great feature that you might find interesting. There is a probe that attaches to the oven. You set the probe for the desired internal temperature of the meat or poultry and when that temperature is reached, the oven shuts off, ensuring the meat will not be overcooked.

I just love my oven—I never thought I would feel this way about an appliance. DCS is not a well-known brand so I wanted to let you know that this is a great oven.

—Eileen Byrnes,
Sandy Hook, Connecticut

Serving artichokes al fresco

I enjoyed your article on artichokes (*Fine Cooking* #57, p. 54). We eat artichokes in season at least once a week, but our favorite method of cooking them is grilling. Here's how we do it:

I trim and boil them for 20 to 25 minutes (this can be done up to a day ahead of time). After they've cooled enough to handle, I cut them in half from stem to tip and scoop out the choke using a melon baller. Then I

brush the halved artichokes with olive oil and minced garlic. (It's good to let them sit and marinate for a couple of hours like this.) I grill them using indirect heat for 10 minutes per side or until they're nicely browned. We serve them with either of these two sauces: mayonnaise with lemon juice, cayenne, and chopped fresh parsley; or mayonnaise with stone-ground mustard and lemon juice. I love to serve them as appetizers for a large outdoor party. I get raves every time.

—Melissa Anderson,
via e-mail ♦

fine Cooking ...around the country

Jennifer Bushman, *Fine Cooking's* culinary ambassador, conducts classes based on recipes from the magazine:

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❖ **August 12:** Cooking on gas at the Cook Street School of Fine Cooking, **Denver**. For info, call 303-308-9300 or visit www.cookstreet.com.

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Plus:

In the **Seattle** area, *Fine Cooking* contributing editor Abby Dodge can be heard on Brian Poor's "Poor Man's Kitchen" on KOMO radio. Consult local listings for dates and times.



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READER SERVICE NO. 86

JOANNE WEIR ("Tomato Salads," p. 37) has written many cookbooks, including the award-winning *You Say Tomato*. Her latest, *Joanne Weir's More Cooking in the Wine Country*, is the companion cookbook to her public television series, "Weir Cooking in the Wine Country." Now working on her third television series, *Weir Cooking in the City*, Joanne also travels all over the world teaching cooking. She lives in San Francisco.



Elizabeth Karmel

North Carolina native **ELIZABETH KARMEL** ("Grilled Shrimp," p. 42) grew up on barbecue and is passionate about all things grilling. So much so, in fact, that she left her marketing and public relations life to start her own business, *Girls at the Grill*, to help women learn to master grilling. When she isn't teaching classes all over the country, Elizabeth has a crazy life of activities ranging from appearing on television (*Sara's Secrets*) and being a guest chef at the James Beard House, to acting as a certified judge for the Kansas City Barbecue Society, participating in the Southern Food Alliance, and judging the IACP cookbook awards.



Craig Stoll

"I love granitas because they offer such an unusual way to convey delicious flavors," says pastry chef **NICOLE PLUE** ("Granitas," p. 46). "Not only that, but their colors are sublime." Born and raised in Los Angeles, Nicole went up the coast to study at the California Culinary Academy in San Fran-



Joanne Weir

When **STEVEN RAICHLEN** ("Grilled Chicken Breasts," p. 32) isn't cooking on one of his three grills at his home in Coconut Grove, Florida, he's off traveling the country, teaching or seeking out new barbecue adventures. Steven is the author of the award-winning *Barbecue Bible*, *How to Grill*, and the new *BBQ USA*. He also runs Barbecue University at the Greenbrier Resort in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia. His school is the subject of his public television show, *Barbecue University*, which debuted in June.



cisco. From there, it was on to a career as a pastry chef in San Francisco and New York City in top restaurants like Hawthorne Lane and Pazo.

CRAIG STOLL ("Dinner with Friends," p. 48) credits an apprenticeship at Dal'Delfina in the small Tuscan town of Artemina with teaching him the importance of simplicity in cooking. Craig continues to cook by this tenet at Delfina, an Italian trattoria in San Francisco, where he is the chef and co-owner.

Between harvesting from her own kitchen garden and making frequent trips to neighboring farmstands, **MOLLY STEVENS** ("Cold Soups," p. 54) has a deep appreciation of and a keen appetite for what grows locally. She's a board member for Vermont Fresh Network, a grassroots coalition of farmers and chefs who work to get local foods into local restaurants. A contributing editor for *Fine Cooking*, Molly is at work on a braising book that's due out next spring.

MARTHA HOLMBERG ("Vinagrettes," p. 58) developed a love of making sauces of all kinds during her years of cooking in Paris. "Sometimes the simplest sauce can pack the biggest punch," she says, which is why she loves vinagrettes and thinks they go with almost anything. Martha is the publisher and editor in chief of *Fine Cooking*.

ABIGAIL JOHNSON DODGE ("Peach Desserts," p. 61), a Paris-trained pastry chef, was *Fine Cooking's* test kitchen director for seven years and is now a contributing editor. She has written and contributed to several cookbooks, including *Savoring America*, which received a 2003 James Beard nomination. She's now at work on her next book, *The Weekend Baker*. Abby travels frequently for *Fine Cooking*, giving cooking demonstrations and teaching classes to readers around the country, so keep an eye out for her next appearance near you.

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READER SERVICE NO. 1

Tender, silky Eggplant

BY RUTH LIVELY

I confess to having been seduced by eggplant. When I first started buying eggplant years ago, it was because I couldn't resist its firm curves and taut, shiny skin. I bought it for its looks, but somewhere along the way, this superficial attraction developed into love and respect as I learned to cook with it in many ways. And while I now use this versatile vegetable in soups, curries, stir-fries, and sautés, two of my favorite ways to cook it are roasting and grilling (see the ideas in the sidebar at right).

Old-fashioned dark-purple eggplant is what hooked me. But now my market carries a range of exotic colors, including lavender and pink (often striped with white), pure pearly white, pale green, white or pale green striped with dark green, and even bright orange. Shapes range from the traditional oblong to teardrop (often called Italian) to long and skinny to round. Most of the different types can be used interchangeably, although the very small eggplant are best suited to pickling. While I think the purple eggplant are prettiest (and meatiest) for roasting and grilling, paler-skinned ones have a milder flavor.

At the market, choose plump, firm eggplant with shiny skin that shows no sign of slackness; over-the-hill fruits are liable to be bitter. If you're growing eggplant, harvest them at any time after they size up and their skin turns shiny, but don't wait too long. Once the skin loses its gloss, an eggplant's quality deteriorates.

Oven-Roasted Eggplant

Serves two as a side dish; yields 2 cups roasted flesh.

This simple preparation is one of the best—as easy and delicious as grilling. Roast small Italian eggplant as a versatile side dish and drizzle with lemon or your favorite vinaigrette. Or roast larger globe eggplant and use the flesh in other recipes, like pastas, soups, or starters (my favorite is the Eggplant Caviar, at far right).

2 pounds eggplant (about 2 globe or 4 Italian)
Kosher salt
2 to 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
8 fresh thyme sprigs
Lemon wedges or a vinaigrette for serving (optional; for recipes, see p. 60)

Wipe the eggplant clean and slice them in half lengthwise. With the tip of a knife, score the flesh deeply in a diamond cross-hatch pattern by making two or three long cuts, cutting at a steep angle, and then rotating the eggplant to make another set of similar cuts. Press on the edges of the halves to open the cuts and sprinkle salt (1 to 1½ teaspoons total for all the halves) over the surface and into the cuts. Set aside, cut side up, for 30 minutes. Heat the oven to 400°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment.

Over the sink, gently squeeze the eggplant to extract the salty juice and wipe them dry with a paper towel. Brush each half thoroughly with olive oil (about 1 teaspoon per half for Italian eggplant, 2 teaspoons per half for globe). Arrange each half,

cut side down, on top of a sprig or two of thyme on the baking sheet. Roast for 1 hour. The eggplant will collapse and the bottoms will be a deep brown caramel color. Let cool considerably before handling, at least 20 minutes. Gently turn the cut side up. If serving as a side dish, serve with a lemon wedge for squeezing or drizzle with vinaigrette. If using in other recipes, scoop the flesh from the skin with a spoon.

Did you know?

An eggplant with a smaller calyx—the leathery, green cap that protrudes from the stem—will often have fewer seeds than one with a larger calyx.



Salt first for less oily eggplant

Eggplant soaks up oil like a sponge, but you can reduce its ability to absorb oil by salting the cut flesh and letting it sit for 30 minutes or more. Then drain, pat dry, and proceed with cooking.

Grill, roast, or bake until very tender

No matter how you decide to prepare eggplant, be sure not to undercook it. The flesh should feel creamy and soft when fully cooked through.

On the grill...

❖ **Brush or spray eggplant slices lightly with oil and then grill** over medium heat until deeply browned on both sides. (If the flesh isn't completely tender, stack the eggplant slices, wrap them in foil, and let them steam to finish cooking).

❖ **Paint eggplant slices with soy sauce, hot sauce, and sesame oil** before grilling. Sprinkle with sliced scallions and drizzle with soy sauce and rice vinegar.

❖ **Make a warm salad** of grilled eggplant and onions with feta, spinach, and pine nuts. Drizzle with a red-wine vinaigrette.

❖ **Make a yogurt topping scented with coriander and mint** to serve over warm or room-temperature grilled eggplant slices.

❖ **For a fresh take on ratatouille**, grill chunky slices of eggplant, summer squash, bell peppers, and mushrooms. Toss with chopped tomatoes, olive oil, lemon juice, garlic, and basil.

❖ **Make a grilled caponata** to spread on toasted country bread. Grill eggplant and onion slices as well as tomato halves. Chop coarsely and season with chopped olives, capers, olive oil, red-wine vinegar, chopped parsley, and a little sugar.

❖ **Use leftover grilled eggplant** as a sandwich filling with goat cheese, as a layer in a lasagna, or as a topping for pizza.

In the oven...

❖ **Make a summer vegetable gratin.** Layer slices of eggplant, summer squash, and tomato in an oiled baking dish. Season with salt and pepper, tuck in basil leaves, drizzle with olive oil, top with a sharp Italian cheese, and bake until tender.

❖ **Roast eggplant halves** and use the flesh as a base for a savory pasta sauce or a dip like eggplant caviar (see the recipe at right).

❖ **Roast oil-brushed eggplant slices** in a very hot oven until well browned (flip once during cooking). Serve warm topped with chopped fresh mint and a squeeze of lemon, or make a sandwich of two eggplant slices with mozzarella or goat cheese in between.

❖ **Marinate thinly sliced roasted eggplant for a zesty antipasto.** After roasting and cooling, toss with red-wine vinegar, slivers of garlic, basil leaves, and red chile flakes. Drizzle with olive oil and let sit for an hour. Serve on bread with a thin slice of tangy aged cheese.



Eggplant Caviar

Yields about 2 cups.

Slather eggplant caviar on little toasts or bread for a wonderful appetizer, or use it as a spread on sandwiches, or as a dip for vegetables. Be sure to taste the caviar and season it as you like with lemon, salt, pepper, olive oil, and herbs.

2 globe eggplant (1 pound each), roasted and cooled (see the recipe at far left)
30 cloves roasted garlic (2 large heads garlic, broken into cloves and roasted; see p. 67 for the method)
1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
1 to 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1 to 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh mint or parsley

Put the roasted eggplant on a cutting board and use a spoon to scrape the flesh from the skins. Peel or press the garlic flesh from the skins and add it to the eggplant on the board. With a large knife, chop the eggplant and garlic together until they form a rough purée. Add the lemon zest, 1 tablespoon of the lemon juice, a generous drizzle of olive oil, ½ teaspoon salt, and a few grinds of pepper. Chop and mix together thoroughly, transfer to a small serving bowl, and taste. Add more lemon juice, oil, or salt if needed. Fold in the mint or parsley. Refrigerate for up to 48 hours if you like; bring to room temperature before serving.

Ruth Lively, formerly the senior editor of Kitchen Gardener, is a contributing editor to Fine Gardening magazine. ♦

What's the best way to freeze fresh corn?

—Kim Parker, via e-mail

A Tasha Prysi replies: On my family's farm in California's central valley, we struggled with this question for several years. Faced with an overflow of fresh corn from my father's field, my mother tested many different methods for freezing it. Freezing the corn raw didn't work well, as the corn would become gummy when it was thawed. She discovered that cooking the corn quickly and cutting the kernels off the cob before freezing best preserved the vegetable's delicate flavor and texture.

To follow her method, shuck the corn and boil it on the cob for 2 minutes. Cool the cobs under running water or in an ice bath and pat them dry. With a sharp knife, cut the kernels off the cob and freeze them in plastic freezer bags.

Fresh corn can be frozen for up to six months. The texture and flavor suffer slightly, but it's still well worth the effort—home-frozen corn is always much better than commercially processed corn. Do cook and freeze the corn when it's fresh (don't let it sit for more than a couple of days) to retain as much of its original sweetness as possible.

Formerly a cook at Chez Panisse, Tasha Prysi now teaches and writes about cooking.

Luckily, the remedy is a simple one. Always pile your meringue topping onto a hot filling. This way, the filling begins to cook the meringue from the bottom up while the oven's heat cooks the exterior. You'll end up with a lovely browned meringue pie that doesn't weep.

Abigail Johnson Dodge, a contributing editor to Fine Cooking, is the author of Great Fruit Desserts.

Are there any tricks to working with hot chiles?

—Jim Phelps, via e-mail

A Jim Peyton replies: People have different tolerances for handling chiles just as they do for eating them. For people who are highly sensitive to chiles, especially to the incendiary habaneros, rubber gloves are the only real solution, and tight-fitting food-service gloves are the best choice.

If you want to work without gloves, the principal areas to avoid are the soft ribs near the seeds, which contain almost 90 percent of the capsaicin, the substance that gives chiles their fiery heat. To do this, handle chiles by the stems and outer skin, and use a spoon or paring knife to remove the seeds and veins.

If you don't wear gloves, it's essential to wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling chiles and to refrain from touching your eyes and other sensitive areas. If you do get a burn, immediately wash the exposed area several times with warm water and soap. If the capsaicin gets in your eyes, use the spray attachment on your sink or shower to wash them with cool water.

Jim Peyton, a restaurant consultant, is the author of New Cooking from Old Mexico. ♦

Do you have a question of general interest about cooking? Send it to Q&A, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506, or by e-mail to fc@taunton.com, and we'll find a cooking professional with the answer.

My plastic storage containers develop a greasy film after a couple of uses, no matter how much I clean them. What can I do about this?

—Cindy Morton, via e-mail

A Sophie Hudson replies: Foods that are tomato-based or high in fat tend to leave a greasy film in plastic containers. There are a couple of easy solutions for getting rid of the film. First, wipe the container with a paper towel to pick up some of the greasy residue. Then, make a thick paste of baking soda and water, rub it inside the container, rinse it out, and wash the plastic in hot, soapy water. I've found this baking soda solution to be a very effective cleaning agent, though you can also try washing the containers with white vinegar instead of, or in addition to, this paste.

If you prefer to simply wash your plastic storage containers with dishwashing soap or detergent, make sure that the soap has a grease-cutting agent.

Sophie Hudson is a senior product manager at Tupperware Corporation

Why does my lemon meringue pie sometimes weep?

—Steven Turk, New Milford, Connecticut

A Abigail Johnson Dodge replies: The "weeping" is probably a result of moisture forming between the meringue and the custard. An undercooked meringue is likely to blame. When the beaten egg whites aren't cooked through completely, the proteins fail to coagulate properly. The undercooked egg whites eventually begin to leak moisture, which forms a puddle between the layers.

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READER SERVICE NO. 48

Grill Pans

Choose a pan that makes your food not only look grilled but taste grilled, too

BY MARYELLEN DRISCOLL

There are plenty of occasions when a grill pan can be exceptionally handy. To name one: rain. To name another: weeknights (gas grillers excepted). Third: maybe you don't own a grill—but you sure would like the illusion of having one. After putting thirteen different grill pans through a series of cooking tests, we have one suggestion—don't pick up just any grill pan. You've got to buy the right one.

Maryellen Driscoll is Fine Cooking's editor at large. ♦

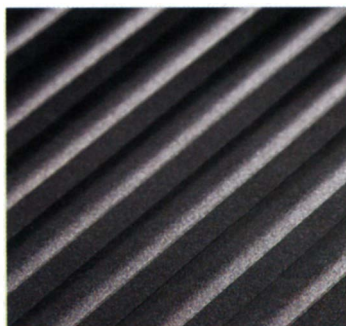
Top picks

These three grill pans stood out as our favorites among the thirteen tested. All are made of cast iron and all have pronounced ridges. They were selected for their superior ability to distribute heat evenly, to cook food with minimal steaming and sticking, and, most important, to deliver great seared flavor. (Listed in alphabetical order.)

What makes a good grill pan



Raised ridges sear best.



Shallow ridges aren't as effective.

During our tests, we discovered two features that set the best grill pans apart from the mediocre versions.

Raised ridges are better than shallow ones

Grill pans can be divided into two styles: those with well-defined raised ridges, most akin to the bars of a grill (top photo, left) and those with shallow ridges reminiscent of speed bumps (bottom photo). We found that grill pans with raised ridges are positively superior when it comes to how the pan cooks and how the food looks and tastes.

A major problem with speed-bump style pans is that the food sits so close to the pan bottom

that it steams, which is certainly no way to cook a steak or a chop. Vegetables turn out limp, watery, and tasteless. (Another quibble with the speed-bump style is that the food doesn't get the best "grill" marks; the lines are quite wide and blurred.)

Grill pans with distinct ridges raise food higher above the pan bottom so that there's significantly less buildup of steam as the food sears. But because the food comes in contact with only the ridges, it can be slow to cook through. See the tips at far right for how to work around this.

Cast iron retains heat best

Besides having distinct ridges, a grill pan should also be made of

cast iron. While grill pans can't perfectly mimic true grilled flavor, cast-iron ones are top-notch at searing, so food tastes almost as if it has been cooked over a fire. This is because of cast iron's excellent ability to retain heat as well as to heat evenly. It's for this same reason that better gas grills have cast-iron grates.

Two shortcomings particular to cast iron are its bulk and the need to season it. The three leading pans in our tests address both these problems with "skinny" designs and factory-seasoned or enameled surfaces. The only drawback some manufacturers have yet to solve is the problem of hot handles.



Le Creuset

price: \$39.95

size: 10-inch round

weight: 5 pounds

material: enameled cast iron

in a variety of colors

retail source: www.surlatable.com; 800-243-0852

PROS: The ridges are set at a diagonal, so you don't have to think about how to place the food to get the classic angled grill marks (just align the food parallel or perpendicular to the handles). Shallow pan sides make it easy to maneuver food. Storage couldn't be more compact. The enameled surface doesn't require seasoning.

CONS: The handles are small and can get extremely hot.

Lodge Pro-Logic

price: \$22.95

size: 12-inch square

weight: 8 pounds 6 ounces

material: seasoned cast iron

retail source: www.kitchenetc.com; 800-232-4070

PROS: The cast iron is already seasoned, and the pan has a generous square cooking surface that holds a lot of food while using just one burner. The sloping, shallow pan sides make it easy to maneuver food. A sizable handle and an "assist" handle on the opposite side make this pan easy to lift.

CONS: It's relatively heavy, and the handles get extremely hot. This brand-new line of Lodge pans isn't yet widely distributed among retailers.

Staub

price: \$39.95

size: 10-inch round

weight: 4 pounds

material: enameled cast iron

retail source: www.chefsresource.com; 866-765-2433

PROS: For cast iron, this pan is remarkably light, and the fold-out handle stays cool. The shallow pan sides make it easy to maneuver food. A pouring lip lets you drain fat easily. Compact design makes storage simple. The enameled surface doesn't require seasoning.

CONS: This pan can run hot; adjust your burner as needed. It's also not widely available. (see the retail source above; for other sizes and shapes, see www.staubusa.com).

Cooking on a grill pan

Because the ridges are the only direct source of heat in contact with food on a grill pan, food can be slow to cook through. Here are some ways to deal with that problem, along with some tips on how to prevent sticking:

For beef and pork:

- ❖ Steaks should be relatively thin and preferably boneless.
- ❖ Chops should be thin, about ½ inch.
- ❖ Burgers should be shaped slightly flat (they'll plump as they cook and will shrink in diameter).

For chicken:

- ❖ Avoid bone-in pieces.
- ❖ Boneless thighs or breasts should be pounded to make them more even and thin; butterflying boneless breasts is another option.
- ❖ Chicken tenderloins are your best choice.

For vegetables:

- ❖ Cut vegetables so that they lie flat.
- ❖ A thick vegetable, like a portabella mushroom, will cook through faster if sliced.

To prevent sticking:

- ❖ Heat the pan over medium heat for at least 3 minutes before adding the food.
- ❖ Brush oil on the food rather than on the pan (this also helps to prevent burnt-on oil and smoking).
- ❖ After adding food to the pan, don't move the food for at least the first minute.

Chardonnay—buttery know its traits to

fruity

Refers to: The naturally fruity flavors of the Chardonnay grape. Fruity Chardonnay undergoes minimal manipulation during winemaking.

Shows up as: Aromas and flavors of apple, pear, peach, tropical fruit, or any combination.

Good with: Picnic-style food like cold roast chicken or turkey, composed salads with chicken, turkey, or seafood; simple pasta with seared vegetables and good olive oil.

Stay away from: Nothing. Fruity Chardonnay is one of the most versatile wines around.

Refers to: Creamy, buttery aromas and flavors common to Chardonnay. A buttery Chardonnay has undergone a winemaking process called malo-lactic fermentation, where the tart green malic acids in the wine are converted by a bacterial culture to the softer type of lactic acids found in dairy products.

Shows up as: At its best, a buttery, creamy aroma. At its worst, smells like stale microwave popcorn. A byproduct of malo-lactic fermentation is diacetyl, a substance that smells and tastes like butter (and is often used to flavor microwave popcorn).

Good with: Rich foods: pastas with cream or cheese sauce; grilled chicken with butter sauce; grilled seafood like tuna, swordfish, or scallops with butter or cream sauce.

Stay away from: Dishes with vinegar- or citrus-based flavorings.

oaky

Refers to: Oak barrels (or oak chips) used during fermentation, aging, or both. Oak is a great component in the overall Chardonnay recipe. But too much overpowers the wine.

Shows up as: At its best, flavors and aromas of vanilla, toast, sweet baking spices, or just plain wood. At its worst, bitter and unpleasant flavors that make the wine practically impossible to pair with food.

Good with: Grilled or seared fish or chicken; rich, soft-ripened cheeses; Swiss-style cheeses.

Stay away from: Delicate, subtle dishes.

BY TIM GAISER

Grown from Tasmania to Chile, from South Africa to France, and just about everywhere in between, Chardonnay is the most popular of all white wines. Why? Because it's both a winemaker's and wine lover's dream: It's easy to grow, easy to make, and a reliably delicious drink made in a wide range of styles.

Though Chardonnay can be planted just about anywhere wine grapes can grow, it tends to thrive in cool climates. Cool-climate Chardonnays tend to be lean and crisp with mouthwatering

acidity, while warmer-climate ones tend to be rich and full bodied, with lots of fruit and, at their best, enough balancing acidity. The Chardonnay grape itself is fairly neutral. But winemaking technique can transform it into something out of the ordinary.

The world's Chardonnay can be generally divided into two categories, Old World and New World.

Old World means European wines. The best examples of Old World Chardonnay come from France;

specifically, from Burgundy, where Chardonnay has been grown for centuries. The Chardonnays of Chablis are renowned for their steely intensity with lemon-citrus and chalky-mineral flavors. Further south, wines from the villages of Meursault, Chassagne-Montrachet and Puligny-Montrachet have a remarkable combination of high-intensity fruit and rapier-like acidity while maintaining the stamp of the specific vineyard where the fruit was grown.

find your favorites

earth/ mineral

Refers to: European-style Chardonnays that tend to be less fruit-forward, especially Chablis.

Shows up as: Aromas and flavors of mineral and earth.

Good with: Roast chicken with root vegetables; sushi, and sashimi; oysters on the half shell; strong-flavored, soft-ripened cheeses like Epoisses; aged goat cheese.

Stay away from: Dishes with fruit-based sauces and compotes.

lean

Refers to: A wine made from grapes grown in a cool region, with a light-bodied, crisp feeling. Chardonnays from Chablis and New Zealand are known above all for this style.

Shows up as: Tart, juicy acidity; flavors of lemon, lime, or Granny Smith apple.

Good with: Salads and vinegar- or citrus-based sauces; sea bass and shellfish; Camembert and aged goat cheese.

Stay away from: Grilled foods.

New World means anywhere vines were transplanted from the Old World. In North America, New World Chardonnay ranges from the vast spectrum of California wines, to Chardonnays made in Oregon and in Eastern Washington, to those made in New York, Virginia, Texas, Ohio, Michigan and New Mexico. In the southern hemisphere, delicious New World Chardonnays come from Argentina, Chile, and South Africa.

But no other New World wine-growers have taken Chardonnay to

heart like the Australians. Because they're skilled in the latest winemaking techniques and in blending fruit from many different regions to achieve a specific style or price point, the Aussies have mastered Chardonnay in practically every possible style; there's an Australian Chardonnay to match every taste and budget. And though you usually think of Sauvignon Blanc when it comes to New Zealand whites, the Chardonnays there are impressive for their tart green fruit and racy acidity; they pair beautifully with food.

Chardonnays to seek out

A good wine is a balance of many qualities, but along with each wine are listed its most distinctive traits, in order of intensity.

2002 Milton Park Chardonnay

Australia; \$8
fruity

2001 Penfolds Rawson's Retreat Chardonnay

Australia; \$9
fruity oaky

2001 J. Lohr Riverstone Chardonnay

Monterey, California; \$13
fruity oaky

2001 Casa Lapostolle Chardonnay

Casablanca, Chile; \$13
fruity oaky buttery

2000 Handley Chardonnay

Dry Creek Valley, California; \$16
fruity buttery oaky

2000 Thornbury Estate Chardonnay

Hawke's Bay, New Zealand; \$18
fruity buttery oaky

2000 Matanzas Creek Chardonnay

Sonoma County, California; \$25
fruity buttery oaky

2001 Domaine Drouhin Chardonnay

Willamette Valley, Oregon; \$25
fruity buttery oaky

2000 Domaine Tremblay Chablis 1er Cru Fourchaume

Chablis, Burgundy, France; \$27
lean mineral

2000 Mount Eden Estate Chardonnay

Santa Cruz Mountains, California; \$50
fruity buttery mineral oaky

1999 Domaine Francois Jobard Meursault "Poruzots"

Meursault, Burgundy, France; \$65
fruity mineral oaky

Tim Gaiser, a contributing editor to Fine Cooking, is a master sommelier. He lives in San Francisco. ♦



After too many bad experiences with cheap hibachis, we've discovered that the **SPORTSMAN'S GRILL FROM LODGE** is the best bet for camping trips, for impromptu grill sessions at the beach, and for people with limited patio space. The grill's small cast-iron frame is plenty sturdy, and the cast-iron grate gives food a wonderful sear. One drawback: The grate must be wiped with a coat of oil after each use to prevent rust. \$83.95 at *Lodge Manufacturing Company* (www.lodgemfg.com; 423-837-7181).



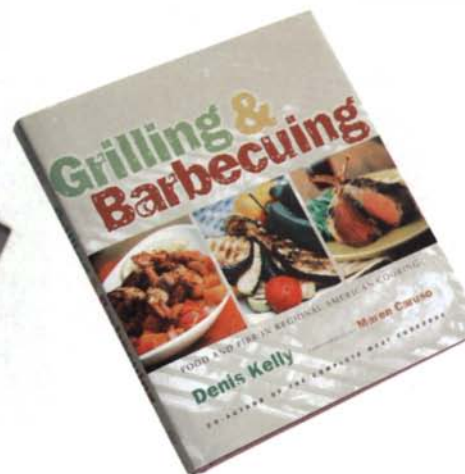
While beer-can chicken—the technique of grilling a whole chicken on a half-full can of beer—has been the buzz at cookouts for the last few summers, we've found that this **POULTRY ROASTER FROM WEBER** works better than the can. You fill the hollow cavity in the middle of the roaster with beer and other flavorings, position the bird on top of it, cover the cavity with the slotted cap, and grill. The roaster cooks the chicken evenly with very juicy results. There's less danger of the bird tipping with this method, and there's no need for an extra drip pan, since the roaster incorporates one. \$29.99 at www.weberstuff.com (417-781-0997).



NAPASTYLE'S FLAVORED SALTS, made with coarse crystals of gray sea salt from Brittany, are a great finishing touch for grilled foods. Bits of lemon and orange peel add brightness to the citrus rosemary blend, which stands up nicely to full-flavored cuts of beef or lamb. The robust tomato flavor in the sun-dried tomato and garlic salt livens up grilled chicken breasts or pork chops. A set of two 4½-ounce tins is \$15 at *NapaStyle* (www.napastyle.com; 866-776-6272).



To infuse your grilled foods with a touch of smoky flavor, try **CHARCOAL COMPANION'S WOOD CHIPS**. Apple chips add mild, sweet smokiness to chicken or pork chops. The stronger flavors from mesquite and hickory chips are great with ribs or roasts. See p. 68 for how to use wood chips. Available at hardware stores and at *Sur La Table* (www.surlatable.com; 800-243-0852), where three 1½-pound boxes are \$8.95.



In **GRILLING & BARBECUING**, Denis Kelly winds readers along America's barbecue trail, highlighting colorful ingredients and techniques from all corners of the country. The recipes are short, the directions clear. We loved the sticky-sweet smokiness of the Chinatown Country-Style Ribs with Hoisin-Mustard Glaze. Kelly uses sage and garlic to spice up his version of beer-can chicken, a great recipe to try with the Poultry Roaster at left. \$29.95 at bookstores; \$20.96 at *Jessica's Biscuit* (800-878-4264; www.ecookbooks.com).

savor.

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READER SERVICE NO. 105

Cooking eggs to tender perfection

BY SHIRLEY O. CORRIHER

When my former husband and I opened a boarding school many years ago, I found myself confounded by the simple process of scrambling eggs. I was a novice cook then, and I thought eggs were something any beginner should be able to cook. I was wrong. Most mornings I ended up with a skillet full of tough curds that stuck like crazy. It turns out that many experienced cooks, too, can be frustrated by this basic food that's easy to mess up. While it took my German mother-in-law to show me how to do it right, you can solve many of your egg problems simply by knowing how eggs cook.

To understand why eggs overcook so easily, it helps to understand how proteins behave when they're heated. Proteins are shaped like small coils. When gently heated, they unwind (denature) and join together loosely with neighboring denatured proteins. Water between or attached to the proteins is held in a moist, tender network. If the heat is too high or the cooking time too long, the protein mesh tightens, squeezing out the water and making the proteins tough, leathery, and watery. So make gentle cooking a rule no matter how you prepare your eggs.

Watch the time with hard-cooked eggs

Since eggs shouldn't be cooked at a hard boil, egg experts prefer the term "hard-cooked" over "hard-boiled." Whatever you call them, there are two problems you'll want to avoid: cracked shells and the ugly green layer that can form around the yolk.

For perfect cooking, start with eggs that don't have any visible cracks. If they've been refrigerated, warm the eggs for four to five minutes in hot tap water. By bringing them to room temperature, they're much less likely to crack in the hot water. In case small cracks do develop, add salt to the cooking water. The salt will help to speed up the denaturing of the egg white, causing less of it to feather into the water. Use at least a tablespoon of table salt per two quarts of water.

When hard-cooking eggs, watch the time carefully. Overcooking causes a green layer to form around the yolk. This layer is caused by a

reaction between the iron in the yolk and the sulfur in the white. Heat speeds up this reaction, so the longer your eggs cook, the greater the chance of discoloration. I arrange my eggs in one layer and add cold water to cover them by an inch and a half. I partially cover the pot, and when the water has reached a full rolling boil, I turn the heat down to low, completely cover the pan, and let the eggs cook for thirty seconds. Then I remove them from the heat and let them sit in the hot water for fifteen minutes. I then put them in a bowl of heavily iced water for five minutes to further prevent overcooking.

Older eggs are easier to peel. The higher pH of an older egg makes the shell come off easier. That's why I don't recommend, as some cooks do, adding vinegar to the cooking water, since it would reduce the natural alkalinity of the slightly older eggs.

Fresh eggs are best for poaching

A properly poached egg will hold together and be tender, not tough. But improperly cooked, a poached egg can be a cloudy mess of feathered egg whites. The first trick to poaching eggs is to use fresh eggs. The thicker white of a fresh egg poaches beautifully without creating all that mess in the water. Getting the egg to set quickly is

also important when poaching. Both acid and salt make proteins in an egg denature faster, so add a little vinegar or salt (or both) to the cooking water. For up to four eggs, I like to use a large, nonstick skillet filled a little over halfway with water.

When the water reaches a slow boil, break your egg into a saucer and

A warm pan keeps scrambled eggs from sticking

Scrambled eggs are a breakfast classic, but more often than not, you can find half of them irretrievably plastered to the bottom of the pan. And as with the other methods of preparing eggs, it's easy to overcook scrambled eggs.

Avoid the temptation to pour raw eggs into a cold pan. This allows them to get into any nicks or imperfections in the surface, causing you to literally cook the eggs into the pan. Heating the empty pan first will expand the metal and effectively "seal" those imperfections so your eggs will cook on the surface, not below it. Your pan is hot enough when you can feel the heat on the upper edge of the pan. I gently heat a heavy, nonstick skillet, remove it from the heat, and spray it lightly with a nonstick cooking spray. Then I return it to medium or low heat for a few seconds before adding the eggs. Don't leave the sprayed empty pan over direct heat for too long, as the spray can "cook" onto

the pan, leaving a residue that's hard to remove. You can use butter instead of the spray, but be sure to keep the heat low, because butter can burn and cause sticking, too.

After you add the beaten eggs to the pan, let them sit untouched for a full minute and they will puff magnificently. The egg holds on to trapped air, which expands when heated. If you stir the eggs vigorously immediately after they go into the pan, you'll stir all the air out of the egg and end up with small curds and not much volume.

After the eggs have puffed, gently push one edge to the center to allow the uncooked eggs to flow into the bare pan. Do this until no liquid eggs flow to the edge and you have a pan of soft mounds that still look moist. Eggs continue to cook after you remove them from the heat, so it's important to remove them when they aren't quite done. By following these tips, you'll have soft, fluffy eggs, not tough, watery ones.

then slip it into the water. This initial dunk will set the outside and keep it from spreading. Once the water returns to a boil, reduce the heat to a low simmer. By simmering the eggs rather than boiling them, you provide gentle cooking that results in a tender egg. When the white is firm, your egg is done.

Shirley O. Corriher, a food scientist and a contributing editor to Fine Cooking, is the author of CookWise. ♦

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READER SERVICE NO. 59



Stuffed grape leaves are a Greek classic

BY DIANE KOCHILAS

In Greece, if it's Easter, or Christmas, or your birthday, it's a good excuse for eating stuffed grape leaves (*dolmathes*). These delicious nuggets are one of the foods most closely associated with traditional Greek cuisine, enjoyed both as an appetizer and as a main course.

Making dolmathes at home is a great opportunity to try out delicious fillings. The best-known recipes for dolmathes are *yalantzi*, either with a filling of rice and herbs, or a combination of ground meat (lamb, or lamb and beef or veal), rice, and herbs. Rice-filled leaves are often served at room temperature with a dollop of thick Greek yogurt, which makes them great for summer entertaining. (One recipe yields more than fifty dolmathes, so they're perfect to make when a crowd is coming.) The herbs in the filling can vary (fresh mint, dill, and parsley are among the favorites); some cooks add raisins or pine

nuts. The stuffed leaves are simmered in a bath of lemon juice, olive oil, and water, both to add flavor and to fully cook the stuffing and tenderize the leaves.

Variations of dolmathes are all over Greece. Some of the most intriguing fillings come from the Aegean Islands. In Kalymnos, I've had dolmathes filled with rice and pumpkin or eggplant. In Rhodes, bulgur wheat and cumin replace the rice. In the north of Greece, the filling might be broad beans or lentils and rice.

When I make dolmathes, I spread out as many leaves as can fit on my countertop and start portioning out the filling. Depending on the size of the leaves, the amount of filling can vary from a heaping teaspoon to a tablespoon; they should be plump but not overstuffed. As I roll up the leaves, I tuck them, seam side down, into the cooking pot snugly, since they'll darken if exposed to air while cooking.

Most of the key ingredients



Grape leaves

In Greece, many cooks pick and preserve their own grape leaves (the season is April and May) to use not only for stuffing but also for wrapping—especially for grilled foods, like fish. The most tender leaves, usually table grape varieties, are the most popular. Leaves from the sultana grape are considered the best.

Most people blanch and freeze the leaves in small packets to ensure a ready supply all winter long. Others prefer to pickle the leaves in brine. On some Aegean islands, cooks string up the leaves like garlands and sun-dry them. They then rehydrate them before stuffing and rolling them. In the United States, fresh grape leaves (mainly from California) are available in some Greek and Middle Eastern markets. Usually, though, you find the leaves brined in jars (available in most grocery stores); a typical jar holds 50 to 60 leaves, although usually some of the leaves are torn.

for dolmathes are in your grocery store



Greek olive oil

Olive oil is as much a part of Greek culture as it is a part of the cuisine. It's used symbolically in the baptismal and wedding rituals of the Greek Orthodox Church; as a lighting fuel, especially for votive candles; and as a moisturizer—I use it on my face. In the kitchen, we use it for frying, sautéing, roasting, braising, stewing, and as a condiment. It's often the preferred fat in pastry and other sweets.

About 90 percent of the olive oil produced in Greece is extra-virgin, made from several varieties of oil olives, mainly the tiny, prized Koroneiki. The best oils come from Crete and the Peloponnesus. Some of my favorites are widely available in the U.S.; see *Where to Buy It*, p. 76.



Greek yogurt

Thick, drained Greek yogurt is a perfect match for almost any dolma. It has the tartness of sour cream, which counters the sweetness of the profuse amount of onions in most dolmathes recipes. It also has a much richer, thicker texture than American yogurt, as more of the whey has been drained. One commercial brand of Greek yogurt, Total (also called Fage), is available widely across the U.S.; see *Where to Buy It*, p. 76. You could substitute sheep's milk or goat's milk yogurt (sold in some groceries and many natural-foods stores) or drain plain full-fat yogurt to thicken it. Start with twice the amount of plain, full-fat yogurt you'll need, and drain it in a colander lined with a double layer of cheesecloth for two to three hours, or until it has reached the consistency of sour cream.

Dolmathes Yialantzi (Grape Leaves Stuffed with Rice & Herbs)

Yields 50 to 55; serves twelve to fifteen as an appetizer.

16-ounce jar brine-packed grape leaves
 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup plus 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
2 medium-large red onions, finely chopped (about 4 cups)
1 cup finely chopped scallions (white and some green)
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1 cup raw long-grain white rice
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup finely chopped fresh dill
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup finely chopped fresh mint
 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup toasted pine nuts
 $2\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons finely grated lemon zest
Juice of 2 lemons (about 6 tablespoons)
2 cups full-fat plain yogurt, preferably Greek (if not Greek, drained to thicken; see the text at left)

Bring a large pot of water to a rolling boil. Drain and rinse the grape leaves and submerge them in the water to soften in three batches, for 2 to 3 minutes per batch. Transfer to a colander with a slotted spoon. Rinse several times under cold water and drain.

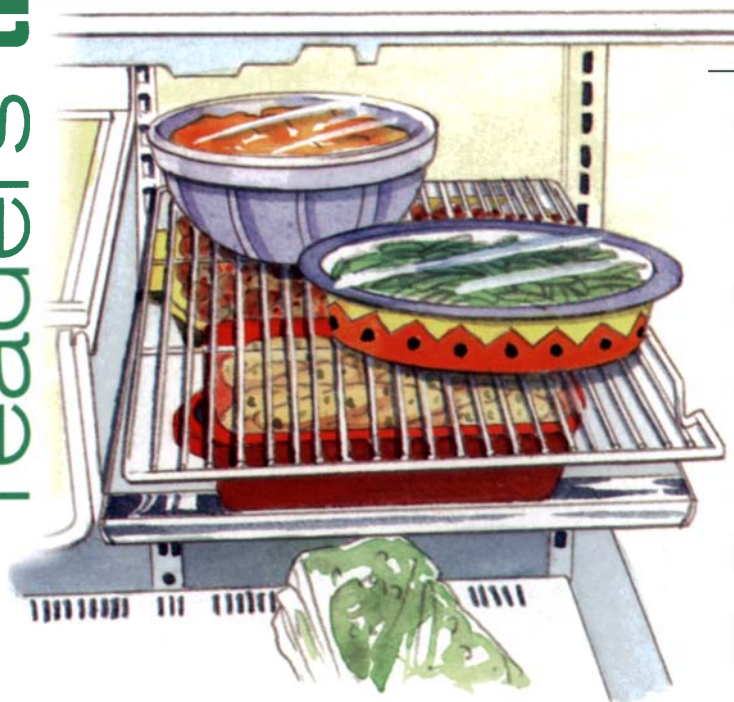
In a 12-inch heavy skillet with a lid, heat $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of the olive oil over medium heat. Add the onions and scallions. Turn the heat to medium low and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onions are very soft and translucent, about 12 minutes. Add the garlic and stir for 1 minute. Add the rice and cook, stirring constantly, for 3 minutes. Add 1 teaspoon salt, a few grinds of pepper, and 1 cup water. Increase the heat to medium, cover, and simmer until the water is absorbed, 5 to 7 minutes. Remove from the heat and let cool. Fold in the herbs, pine nuts, and lemon zest and season with a little more pepper.

Set aside any grape leaves that are too small or too irregular to roll. Arrange the remaining leaves, vein side up, in rows on a large surface. Snip off any stems. Pour 2 tablespoons of olive oil onto the bottom of a large (preferably 3-quart) saucepan. Lay four or five of the most irregular leaves, overlapping, over the oil, covering the bottom of the pot.

Arrange about 1 heaping tablespoon of the rice mixture (less if the leaves are very small) across the bottom center of a leaf. Fold the left and right sides over the filling and roll up, gently but tightly, until you have a small log resembling an egg roll. Set it seam side down in the pot. Repeat with the remaining stuffing and leaves, snuggling the rolls closely together. Start a new layer when the bottom is covered.

Drizzle the remaining $\frac{1}{3}$ cup olive oil and the lemon juice over the grape leaves. Sprinkle on a few pinches of salt. Cut a piece of parchment to fit tightly over the surface of the leaves and set it on top. Put a heatproof plate that fits inside the pot on top of the parchment, to weigh down the leaves and keep them from opening while cooking. Slowly pour in enough water to just cover the grape leaves. Bring to a boil, lower to a simmer, and cover the pot. Simmer over low heat until the leaves are tender and the rice is thoroughly cooked, 45 to 60 minutes. (By the time the leaves and rice are cooked, most of the liquid will have been absorbed). Remove the stuffed grape leaves from the pot with a slotted spoon, cover with damp paper towels and plastic wrap, and let them cool to room temperature. (If not serving right away, refrigerate for up to three days and bring to room temperature before serving.) Serve with the yogurt on the side.

Diane Kochilas is the author of four cookbooks, including The Glorious Foods of Greece. She also runs The Glorious Greek Kitchen Cooking School on the island of Ikaria each summer. ♦



WINNING TIP

Pastry cooling racks create extra refrigerator space

When I'm cooking dishes ahead for a dinner party, I make extra storage space in my refrigerator by setting a cooling rack on top of my food containers so I can store more food on top. This way, I can easily make six to eight dishes ahead of time and keep them safely chilled without taking up my entire refrigerator.

—Colleen Lanigan-Ambrose,
Seal Beach, California

Marinate garlic and shallots to mellow them

I like to use finely minced garlic and shallots whenever I make salad dressing. To mellow the sharp, pungent taste of the raw garlic and shallots, I always add a bit of lemon juice and salt and let them sit for a few minutes before adding the rest of the dressing ingredients. This makes my salad dressing taste more mellow and complex.

—Kara Adanalian,
Fairfax, California

Mark a clear chopping mat to cut vegetables precisely

I used a permanent marker to write ruler measurements like ½ inch, ¾ inch, and 1 inch on the back of my cheap, flexible, translucent chopping mat. Then, if a recipe calls for carrots diced ½ inch, for example, I can use the marks to guide me without having to pull out a ruler. This helps me prep my ingredients more precisely so they'll cook

evenly. Be sure to write the numbers backward so they'll read properly on the good side of the mat. I also draw measured circles on another mat for rolling out pastry dough.

—Ken Fruehstorfer,
Palatine Bridge, New York

Parcook large onions before grilling

I love the sweet taste of grilled onions, but with their high sugar content, they often burn before they're cooked through. To prevent this, I slice the onions in half through the stem and microwave them on high for three minutes. Then I brush the onions with olive oil and set them, flat side down, on the grill over an area of lower heat. I can then forget about them while grilling the rest of my dinner, and the onions will brown slowly and stay nice and juicy.

—Diane T. Farrell,
South Wayne, Wisconsin

Make fresh breadcrumbs without a food processor

I was making the Pork Chops with a Dijon-Rye Crust from your Quick & Delicious section recently (*Fine Cooking* #57), and the recipe called for fresh breadcrumbs made by pulsing caraway rye bread in a food processor. Since I don't own a food processor, I tore each bread slice into four or five large pieces and made perfect crumbs from them by rubbing the pieces between my palms. Be sure to use deli-style rye bread, not the soft, fluffy type or you'll end up with bread "ropes" instead of crumbs.

—Patricia Yates,
Manhattan Beach, California

Use a potato masher to mix ground meat

I often make meatloaf because my family likes it, but I hate mixing the ingredients by hand because it's so messy. I've found that an old-fashioned potato masher (the kind with an S-shaped



wire) works beautifully to mix the ground meat, breadcrumbs, and eggs together—just gently mash the ingredients together as you would mash potatoes, scraping the bowl occasionally with a rubber spatula.

—Carol Ogren,
St. Paul, Minnesota

A space-saving way to make yogurt cheese

I love to serve tangy yogurt cheese in the summer as a dip for raw vegetables and pita chips, but since I don't have enough refrigerator space to hold a full-size strainer to drain the yogurt, I came up with a unique method. I use a clean, 32-ounce yogurt container with some cheesecloth draped inside, the outer edges of the cheesecloth held in place with a rubber band around the rim of the container. The cheesecloth creates a little hammock to hold the yogurt while it's draining, and the container's lid can be snapped on to protect the contents from any strong-smelling foods in the refrigerator.

—James Koyanagi,
Dawson City, Yukon Territory

Erase cooking smells with an air cleaner

When my puny kitchen fan died recently, I was desperate to find a way to get rid of the persistent cooking smells that hung in the air. My eyes lighted on the huge, round air cleaner I keep in the living room for a family member with allergies, and I lugged it into the kitchen and plugged it in the next time I did some cooking. It did an amazing job, getting rid of even the strongest, fishiest smells. Now, I won't cook salmon without it.

—Joan Lord,
New York, New York



Freezing fresh cilantro

To avoid wasting fresh, leftover cilantro, I pick the leaves off the stems and put them in snack-size zip-top bags, add enough water to cover, and freeze the bags flat on their sides. Freezing the cilantro in water prevents freezer burn by keeping air away from the leaves. When I need to use some, I just break off a chunk of cilantro "ice."

—Paul Vinett,
Norwalk, Connecticut

Save vegetable cooking water for stock

When I boil sweet-tasting vegetables like corn, carrots, zucchini, and string beans, I save the cooking water to make vegetable stock. I use a large, slotted spoon to remove the vegetables from the pot, add a sliced onion, a stick of celery, a tomato, and a carrot or two (if the broth isn't carrot-based) to the pot of vegetable cooking water and simmer it, uncovered, for 25 minutes. The resulting broth—sweet and rich with the taste of fresh summer vegetables—can be frozen for future use in soups. I find that my vegetable broth tastes much better than the canned variety.

—Tiny Shuster,
St. Johnsville, New York

Use plastic wrap for easy egg poaching

When I have company for brunch, I love to serve the salmon hash with dilled crème fraîche and poached eggs from

Fine Cooking #56 (p. 51). To make perfectly shaped poached eggs ahead of time, I put a sheet of microwaveable plastic wrap into a small cup, add a few drops of olive oil, salt, pepper, and a raw egg into each cup and close the plastic wrap with a twist tie. Then I drop the plastic-wrapped eggs into boiling water until they're cooked to the right consistency, put the eggs on a kitchen towel to cool, and then refrigerate them in their wrappers. I can reheat the eggs simply by dropping the plastic-wrapped bundles back into boiling water for a few seconds.

—Paula Wolfert,
San Francisco, California

Improvise a salad spinner

You can improvise a salad spinner with a plastic grocery bag. Pick out a strong bag with no holes and stuff several paper towels inside. Then place the lettuce in the midst of the paper towels, grab the handles, check for stray guests and children, and twirl the bag around, as if you were going to rope a calf, about ten times. The paper towels will soak up the water, and the lettuce will come out nice and dry.

—Karl Kaufmann,
Balboa, Republic of Panama

Stick-free grilled chicken

To keep my grilled chicken from sticking, I always start grilling it skin side up. When the chicken skin starts to cook, it releases enough fat to keep it from sticking to the grill, so I can turn the chicken pieces over and get those nice grill marks without fearing that the chicken will glue itself to the grill.

—Beth Combs,
Seattle, Washington ♦

ENTER & WIN

Attention clever cooks: We want your best tips. We'll pay for the ones we publish—and we'll give a prize (see below) to the cleverest tip in each issue. Write to Tips, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506 or send e-mail to fc@taunton.com.



The prize: An Oxo salad spinner "gift basket" filled with a Kyocera ceramic fruit and vegetable slicer, a Zyliss ergonomic swivel peeler, a Messermeister heavy-duty garlic/ginger press, a Microplane zester/grater, a 14-inch WMF ball whisk, and a Kuhn Rikon safety can opener. Value: \$125.

4 ways to grill chicken

BY STEVEN RAICHLEN

As I travel around the country, I notice there's one major grilling dilemma that consistently confounds outdoor cooks: how to keep boneless chicken breasts from drying out on the grill. You can blame it on the grill's dry high heat, which gives food an intense flavor but also has a tendency to dry out lean cuts of meat. Fortunately, there's more than one solution to this problem. My strategies include coating the chicken breasts with rubs and glazes, soaking them in a quick brine, pounding them thinly, or grilling them under a brick—a real conversation starter. Each method will help keep your grilled chicken moist and flavorful and make it the star of your summer barbecues.

The three rules of great grilling

Whenever I grill chicken breasts (or anything else, for that matter), I use the following guidelines to minimize sticking and maximize flavor and grill marks:

Keep it hot. Heat your gas grill to high or build a “three Mississippi” fire in a charcoal grill. For the latter, hold your hand about four inches above the grate. Start counting “one Mississippi, two Mississippi...” and by “three Mississippi,” the intense heat should force you to snatch your hand away.

Keep it clean. Scrub the hot grate thoroughly with a stiff wire brush. This dislodges any debris and minimizes sticking. If you don't have a grill brush, use a crumpled ball of aluminum foil and hold it with tongs.

Keep it lubricated. Roll a paper towel into a small ball, dip it in vegetable or olive oil, and using tongs, rub it over the bars of the grill grate. Oiling the grill helps prevent sticking, and it helps you get great grill marks.



breasts for moist, tender results



Steven Raichlen doubles the flavor with a rum- and pineapple-spiked finishing glaze over a rub inspired by Jamaican jerk.

A rub is a mix of herbs and spices that gives meat a savory crust. It can be “dry” (made with dried or powdered seasonings) or “wet” (with vinegar, oil, beer, or other liquid added). A rub is a handy way to add flavor quickly, since it can be patted on just before grilling. For richer, more complex flavor, I’ll let the rub season the meat for an hour or two before grilling.

A glaze is usually a syrupy mixture of butter or oil, a sweetener (like brown sugar or honey), and often a spirit (like bourbon or rum). I like to apply glazes to chicken halfway through grilling. They serve a dual purpose: They add an extra layer of flavor, and they give the finished chicken a shiny, browned appearance.



1 Rubs and glazes add flavor fast

Island-Spiced, Pineapple-Glazed Grilled Chicken Breasts

Serves four.

Here’s a twist on traditional American barbecued chicken. The seasoning is a rub similar to Jamaica’s jerk, and the “sauce” is a rum and pineapple glaze.

FOR THE RUB AND THE CHICKEN:

- 1 tablespoon packed dark brown sugar**
- 1½ teaspoons kosher salt**
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander**
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme**
- ½ teaspoon onion powder**
- ½ teaspoon ground allspice**
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon**
- ¼ to ½ teaspoon cayenne**
- 4 boneless skinless chicken breast halves (6 to 8 ounces each), trimmed, rinsed, and patted dry**
- 1½ tablespoons vegetable oil**
- 2 cloves garlic, minced**
- 2 scallions (white and green parts), minced**

FOR THE PINEAPPLE-RUM GLAZE:

- ¼ cup salted butter**
- ¼ cup packed dark brown sugar**
- ¼ cup dark rum**
- ¼ cup pineapple juice**

Make the rub and prepare the chicken: Combine the brown sugar, salt, coriander, pepper, thyme, onion powder, allspice, cinnamon, and cayenne in a small bowl and stir to mix. Set the breasts in a baking dish and drizzle with the oil, rubbing it

over the meat on both sides. Sprinkle the rub, garlic, and scallions on both sides of the chicken, patting the seasonings into the meat with your fingers. Refrigerate for 1 hour while you make the glaze and prepare the grill.

Make the glaze: Combine the butter, brown sugar, rum, and pineapple juice in a heavy saucepan. Boil until syrupy, 7 to 10 minutes over medium-high heat. Don’t worry if the mixture starts to separate. Whisk it vigorously to combine.

Grill the chicken: Heat a gas grill to high or prepare a hot charcoal fire. Scrub and oil the grill grate.

Arrange the chicken breasts on the grill at a 45-degree angle to the bars of the grate. Grill until the chicken has grill marks, about 2 minutes, and then rotate the breasts 90 degrees (to get a crosshatch of grill marks) and continue grilling for 2 to 4 minutes. Flip the chicken breasts and generously brush the cooked tops with glaze. Cook the second side the same way, for 4 to 6 minutes. Flip the chicken breasts again, brush with the glaze, and grill until the breasts are firm to the touch, another 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer the breasts to a platter. Serve at once, drizzled with any remaining glaze.

2 Brines keep the meat juicy

A brine is a salt and water solution that helps keep chicken breasts moist through the process of osmosis. The basic formula for a brine is 1 tablespoon salt and an optional 1 tablespoon sugar or other sweetener for every 1 cup water. Other possible flavorings include herbs, garlic, spirits, and—for an interesting but subtle twist—coffee. The typical brining time for boneless chicken breasts is 2 to 3 hours. Don't brine them for much longer, as overbrining will give the chicken a rubbery texture and make it overly salty.



A shot of coffee in the brine gives chicken an unexpected, subtle flavor and an attractive mocha hue.



Grilled Coffee-Brined Chicken Breasts

Serves four.

Using wood chips while grilling this chicken is entirely optional, but the smoke gives the chicken an added dimension of flavor. Serve the chicken with your favorite barbecue sauce, if you like.

1/4 cup kosher salt
1/4 cup packed dark brown sugar
3 cups water
4 slices lemon (1/4 inch thick)
1 tablespoon black peppercorns
1 tablespoon mustard seeds
1 tablespoon coriander seeds
3/4 cup strong brewed coffee
4 boneless skinless chicken breast halves (6 to 8 ounces each), trimmed and rinsed

1 cup wood chips (such as oak or hickory), soaked in water for 1 hour and drained (optional)
2 tablespoons melted butter or olive oil

To make the brine, combine the salt, sugar, water, lemon, peppercorns, mustard seeds, and coriander seeds in a medium saucepan and heat over medium heat, whisking occasionally, until the salt and sugar dissolve, about 5 minutes. Transfer to a medium-large bowl, add the coffee, and refrigerate until cool, about 15 minutes. Put the chicken breasts in the brine and set a pot lid or small plate on top to keep them submerged. Refrigerate them in the brine for 2 to 3 hours.

Heat a gas grill to high or prepare a hot charcoal fire. If using

wood chips with a gas grill, pile them in the smoker box or in a smoker pouch (see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 68). Run your grill on high until you see smoke. If using a charcoal grill, toss the wood chips directly onto the hot coals.

Drain the chicken and blot dry with paper towels. Lightly brush both sides with the melted butter or oil. Arrange the breasts on the grill at a 45-degree angle to the bars of the grate. Grill until they have grill marks, about 2 minutes, and then rotate them 90 degrees (to get a crosshatch of grill marks) and continue grilling for 2 to 4 minutes. Flip the breasts and cook until they're firm to the touch, another 4 to 6 minutes. Serve immediately.

Herbed Grilled Chicken Breasts

Serves four.

4 boneless skinless chicken breast halves (6 to 8 ounces each), trimmed and rinsed
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
Crushed red chile flakes
3 cloves garlic, minced
2 tablespoons chopped fresh rosemary, flat-leaf parsley, or other fresh herb
¼ cup fresh lemon juice, plus 4 lemon wedges for serving
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil; more for drizzling

Lightly wet a chicken breast with cold water and set it between two sheets of plastic wrap.

Pound it into a broad, flat sheet about ¼-inch thick (called a paillard), using a meat pounder, the side of a heavy cleaver, or a skillet. Pound the other breasts into paillards the same way and arrange them on a baking sheet.

Generously season each paillard on both sides with salt and pepper and a pinch or two of chile flakes. Sprinkle both sides with the garlic and rosemary. Drizzle both sides with the lemon juice and olive oil and pat into the meat with your fingertips.

Refrigerate the paillards for 20 minutes while you prepare the grill.

Heat a gas grill to high or prepare a hot charcoal fire. Brush and oil the grill grate.

Arrange the paillards on the grill grate and grill until cooked and firm to the touch, 1 to 2 minutes per side. (Use a long, wide spatula to move and turn the paillards.) Transfer the paillards to a platter or plates. Drizzle with olive oil and serve immediately with lemon wedges for squeezing.



3 Pounding thinly gets reliable results

Paillard (pronounced pie-YARD) is the French term for a boneless chicken breast or other cut of meat that's been pounded into broad, thin sheets about ¼ inch thick. This process minimizes the cooking time to about 1 minute per side, so the chicken doesn't have time to dry out. And since the thickness is consistent, the breast cooks evenly. I tend to keep the seasonings simple when making paillards: salt, pepper or hot chile flakes, garlic, herbs, a squeeze of fresh lemon juice, and most important, olive oil, which adds flavor and moistness and keeps the chicken from sticking to the grill.



4 A brick helps cook the chicken evenly

Cooking chicken under a brick is a technique I learned in Italy, where it goes by the name of *pollo al matone*. The basic method is to wrap a brick in aluminum foil (shiny side out for aesthetics) and put it on top of the chicken breasts during grilling. The brick does three things: It compacts the meat so that it cooks more evenly, it presses the meat against the grill grate so you get good grill marks, and it keeps the breasts partially covered, helping to keep them from drying out. If you don't have a brick handy, you can use a heavy cast-iron or steel skillet. Just wrap the underside with foil.



A tequila-lime marinade adds flavor to these chicken breasts; keeping them weighted down with a foil-wrapped brick guarantees juicy, consistent results.

Tex-Mex Chicken Under a Brick

Serves four.

Chicken under a brick was born in Italy, but the Mexican version, *pollo a la piedra* (chicken under a stone), was my inspiration for a Tex-Mex rendition flavored with cilantro, chiles, lime, and tequila. I use some of the ingredients as a marinade and some for a quick salsa to serve with the chicken. Serve with tortillas for wrapping.

- 4 boneless skinless chicken breast halves (6 to 8 ounces each), trimmed, rinsed, and patted dry**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds**
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped**
- ¾ cup chopped fresh cilantro, plus 4 sprigs for garnish**
- 2 fresh jalapeños, cored, seeded, and chopped (for more heat, include the ribs and seeds)**

- ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice**
- ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**
- 2 tablespoons tequila**
- 2 large ripe red tomatoes (about 12 ounces total), cored and cut into ½-inch dice**

Wrap two bricks (or two large cast-iron skillets), in foil (shiny side out). Arrange the breasts in a baking dish. Generously season them on all sides with 1½ teaspoons salt, pepper, the cumin seeds, and the garlic. Combine the cilantro and jalapeños in a medium bowl; pat half of this mixture onto the chicken and refrigerate the other half. Pour ¼ cup of the lime juice and ¼ cup of the olive oil over the chicken, turning to coat both sides. Sprinkle the tequila on top. Refrigerate for 2 hours.

Shortly before you're ready to grill, combine the remaining

cilantro mixture with the tomatoes in a small bowl. Toss with the remaining 2 tablespoons each lime juice and olive oil. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Heat a gas grill to high or prepare a hot charcoal fire. Brush and oil the grill grate. Arrange the chicken breasts on the grate at a 45-degree angle to the bars. Set one brick (or skillet) on top of two breasts each and grill for 3 minutes. Flip the breasts, cover again with the bricks, and continue grilling until cooked through and firm to the touch, another 3 to 5 minutes. Transfer the chicken to plates or a platter. Garnish with the salsa and serve.

Steven Raichlen is the author of The Barbecue Bible, How to Grill, and the new BBQ USA. ♦



Tomato Salads

Vine-ripened tomatoes team up with your favorite summer ingredients to make simple, colorful dishes bursting with flavor

Tomato Salad with Feta, Olives & Mint

Serves six.

6 ounces feta cheese
¼ cup chopped fresh mint,
plus sprigs for garnish
4 large ripe tomatoes, cut into
¼-inch slices
Kosher salt
½ pound cucumber, peeled,
seeded, and cut into small
dice
½ pound bite-size tomatoes
(cherry, pear, or grape) in
assorted colors, halved
½ cup niçoise or kalamata
olives (about 15), pitted and
halved
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
½ teaspoon grated lemon zest
4 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
Freshly ground black pepper

Crumble the feta into a small bowl. Add the chopped mint and toss; set aside.

Season the tomato slices with salt and then arrange them, overlapping slightly, on a serving platter. Sprinkle the cucumber over the tomato slices. Season the bite-size tomatoes with salt and scatter them over the cucumber. Sprinkle the olives on top.

In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, lemon zest, and lemon juice. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Drizzle the vinaigrette over the salad.

To serve, scatter the feta over the salad, garnish with the mint sprigs, and serve immediately.



BY JOANNE WEIR

There's hardly a pleasure greater than taking the summer's first bite of a ripe, juicy tomato fresh off the vine. Whether it's a tiny pear-shaped tomato or a perfectly round red slicer, a tomato at its peak is about as good as it gets. One of my favorite ways to showcase the tremendous variety of tomatoes that are available at the height of summer is in a tomato salad.

Tomato salads let me get creative by allowing me to choose from a wide variety of ingredients and seasonings: fresh herbs (parsley, mint, chives, cilantro, basil, oregano, savory), cheeses (feta, mozzarella, goat cheese, ricotta salata, Gorgonzola), vegetables (corn, lettuces, green beans, peppers, cucumbers, avocado)—not to mention ingredients like pine nuts, olives, capers, prosciutto, bacon, fish, shellfish, smoked meats, and pasta that



Cherry Tomato Bread Salad with Basil & Fresh Mozzarella

Serves six.

- 6 slices, ½ inch thick, ciabatta or other squat, chewy bread**
- 2 tablespoons plus ⅓ cup extra-virgin olive oil**
- Kosher salt**
- 30 basil leaves**
- 1 small strip lemon zest, about 2 inches long, white pith removed**
- 4 cups small cherry tomatoes (or other bite-size tomatoes, such as pear or grape) in assorted colors, halved**
- 1 pound small fresh mozzarella balls (about 1 inch in diameter)**
- ¼ teaspoon crushed red chile flakes**
- Freshly ground black pepper**

Heat the oven to 400°F. Tear the bread into 1-inch pieces, pile them on a rimmed baking sheet, and drizzle with 2 tablespoons of the oil. Sprinkle with salt, toss, spread in a single layer, and bake, turning occasionally, until the bread cubes are golden and crunchy, 8 to 12 minutes. Set aside to cool.

Bring a saucepan of water to a boil. Add the basil leaves and lemon zest and blanch for 5 seconds. Drain. Transfer the basil and zest to a blender and pulse a few times to chop the leaves. With the blender running, slowly add the remaining ⅓ cup oil through the lid's fill hole and process for 30 seconds. Scrape down the sides of the blender and continue to purée until smooth, 30 to 60 seconds.

In a large bowl, toss together the cherry tomatoes, mozzarella, and bread cubes. Let sit, tossing occasionally, for 20 minutes. Sprinkle with the chile flakes; season with salt and pepper to taste. Drizzle some of the basil oil over the salad. Serve immediately, passing the remaining basil oil at the table.

add texture and substance. The combinations are limitless. And the effort is minimal: Make a vinaigrette, chop the herbs and other ingredients, slice the tomatoes, and you're pretty much done. Serve as a first course, or add a loaf of bread and you've got a meal.

Choose a kaleidoscope of colors and sizes. While you can make a delicious salad with just one or two varieties, don't limit yourself. For instance, I sometimes layer sliced red, green, yellow, and orange tomatoes with red grape, yellow teardrop, and green cherry tomatoes. And I also experiment with slicing. Depending on their size, and whether I want a chunky, rustic salad or a pretty layered one, I'll cut tomatoes into wedges, slices, or halves. I almost always halve cherry tomatoes, as they're hard to eat whole.

Assemble your tomato salad at the last minute. Tomatoes will leach their liquid if you combine and season the salad ingredients too far in advance. This not only dilutes the dressing but also leaves your salad sitting in an unappealing pool of liquid. All the recipes here let you prep the ingredients ahead, so the only last-minute effort is assembly.

Never forget to season a tomato salad with salt (preferably kosher or another coarse salt; fleur de sel is a real treat). Salt magically brings out the best taste in a tomato. If it's a salad that's composed in layers, season each layer as you assemble.

Finally, always serve a tomato salad at room temperature, never cold (see the sidebar on p. 40). A true tomato lover like me wants to be sure to enjoy a tomato in all its glory.

Tomato, Avocado, Corn & Black Bean Salad

Serves four to six.

- 2 ears fresh corn, unhusked**
- 1 small red onion**
- 5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil; more for brushing**
- Kosher salt**
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds**
- ¼ cup fresh lime juice**
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh jalapeño**
- 4 medium-large ripe tomatoes, cored, seeded, and cut into 1-inch chunks**
- ½ cup drained canned black beans, rinsed**
- ½ cup loosely packed cilantro leaves, chopped**
- 1 medium avocado, halved, pitted, peeled, and cut into medium dice**
- Freshly ground black pepper**
- 1 scallion (white and green parts), thinly sliced at a sharp diagonal**

Heat a gas grill to medium high or prepare a medium-hot charcoal fire. Remove the thick, outer leaves of the corn husk. Peel back the inner leaves, being careful to leave them attached to the cob. Remove as much of the corn silk as possible and fold the inner leaves back over the corn. It's fine if some of the kernels show through the gaps in the leaves.

Trim the ends of the onion, peel it, and cut it into ½-inch slices. Thread the slices on skewers, brush liberally with olive oil, and season with salt.

Once the fire is hot, put the corn and skewered onion slices on the grate and cover the grill. Grill the onion slices, flipping once so that they brown on both sides, for 8 to 10 minutes total. Wrap the slices in foil and set aside; they'll continue to cook and soften a bit before they cool. Grill the corn for 10 to 15 minutes, flipping often until the husk is very charred and the kernels feel cooked when pressed with a fingernail; some of the kernels will be browned. Set aside to cool slightly before cutting the

kernels off the cobs. Coarsely chop the cooled onion slices into ½-inch dice.

Heat a small skillet over medium heat. Toast the cumin seeds in the hot, dry pan, shaking frequently, until fragrant, about 20 seconds. Coarsely crush the seeds in a mortar, a coffee or spice grinder, or seal them in a plastic bag and crush them with a rolling pin.

Combine the cumin seeds, lime juice, jalapeño, and 1 teaspoon salt in a small bowl. Gradually whisk in the 5 tablespoons of oil to blend.

Lightly season the tomato chunks with salt. Transfer to a medium bowl and add the corn, onion, black beans, and cilantro. Drizzle the vinaigrette over the salad and toss gently. Fold in the avocado. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Garnish with the scallion and serve immediately.

It's worth the effort to find a good tomato

Homegrown tomatoes are best, of course, but if you don't have a garden, head for your local farmers' market, where you'll find a dazzlingly colorful array of tomatoes. At the market, choose firm tomatoes with shiny skin and bold, vibrant color. To check for ripeness, smell them: They should be very aromatic, especially at the stem. Also, the small spiky leaves at the stem end should look fresh and gray-green.

In the supermarket, don't be fooled by tomatoes sold with the vine attached. These tomatoes may have great texture but not necessarily good flavor. And don't be deceived by the red globe tomatoes in supermarkets, either. Some stores make an effort to carry locally grown tomatoes in season, but for the most part, the tomatoes you find there are picked green and refrigerated for weeks, then sprayed with ethylene gas (the natural ripening agent in tomatoes) to redden them for sale. Yes, they're red, but they're not ripe.



Tomato & Fresh Green Bean Salad with Crisp Prosciutto

Serves six to eight.

Summer savory has a peppery flavor and pungent aroma. If you can't find it, substitute fresh thyme or marjoram.

6 medium-size ripe red tomatoes, each cut into 6 wedges
Kosher salt
4 thin slices prosciutto (about 2 ounces)
12 ounces fresh green beans, trimmed and cut into 2-inch pieces
3 tablespoons chopped fresh summer savory, plus fresh sprigs for garnish
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 tablespoons sherry vinegar
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
Freshly ground black pepper
1½ cups yellow and orange cherry tomatoes (or other bite-size tomatoes), halved

Heat the oven to 400°F. Put a large pot of salted water on to boil.

Put the tomato wedges in a colander set over a bowl. Sprinkle with with 1 tablespoon salt, toss, and let stand for 30 minutes.

Slice the prosciutto crosswise into ½-inch strips. Arrange on a baking sheet in a single layer and bake until crisp and light golden, about 10 minutes. Set aside.

Meanwhile, when the water comes to a boil, add the beans and cook until tender, 4 to 6 minutes. Drain and let cool.

In a small bowl, whisk together the chopped savory, garlic, and vinegar. Whisk in the olive oil to blend. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Combine the tomato wedges, cherry tomatoes, and green beans in a bowl. Add the vinaigrette, toss, and season with salt and pepper to taste. Transfer to a shallow serving bowl or platter, sprinkle with the prosciutto, and garnish with the savory sprigs. Serve immediately.

Don't refrigerate tomatoes

No matter what kind of tomato, keep it out of the refrigerator. Chilling destroys one of the tomato's key flavor components—(2)-3-dexenal—and it also makes the texture mealy.

Ideally, tomatoes should be stored away from light at about 50°F.



Tomato, Chive & Pine Nut Salad with Gorgonzola Toasts

Serves six to eight.

This salad is gorgeous when you make it with the four colors of tomato, but it's still excellent if you only use one or two colors.

- 1/3 cup pine nuts**
- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil**
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter, at room temperature**
- 3 ounces Gorgonzola, at room temperature**
- 3 tablespoons minced fresh chives**
- 6 slices (about 1/2 inch thick) bread from a crusty, round, country-style loaf**
- 1 large ripe yellow tomato, cut into 1/2-inch slices**
- 1 large ripe red tomato, cut into 1/2-inch slices**
- 1 large ripe orange tomato, cut into 1/2-inch slices**
- 2 medium-size striped tomatoes, such as Zebras, cut into 1/2-inch slices**
- 1/2 pound bite-size tomatoes (cherry, pear, or grape) in a variety of colors, halved**
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh flat-leaf parsley**

Put the pine nuts in a small, dry skillet. Cook over medium heat, stirring almost constantly, until golden, about 2 minutes. Transfer to a plate and let cool.

In a small bowl, whisk the olive oil into the vinegar to blend. Season to taste with salt and pepper and set aside. In another



small bowl, mash together the butter, Gorgonzola, and 1 tablespoon of the chives with a fork.

Heat the broiler. Put the bread on a baking sheet and broil, turning once, until golden brown on both sides, 2 to 4 minutes per side. Immediately spread the cheese mixture on the hot toasts. Cut the toasts diagonally into 3-inch pieces.

Season the tomato slices and bite-size tomatoes separately with salt. On a platter or on individual serving plates, arrange the tomato slices, alternating the colors. Sprinkle with the cherry tomatoes; season to taste with salt and pepper. Drizzle the vinaigrette over the tomatoes and then sprinkle with the parsley, the remaining chives, and the

toasted pine nuts. Arrange the toasts around the salad and serve immediately.

Joanne Weir is the author of the award-winning cookbook, You Say Tomato. She lives in San Francisco. ♦

wine choices



For tomato salads, stick to wines that are light, fruity, and **not oaky**

Pairing tomato salads with wine is easy as long as you stick to a few parameters: A ripe tomato's delectable combination of fruity, herby, and high-acid flavors needs light wines without a lot of alcohol or oak. Dry rosés are some of my favorites to pair with tomato salads.

Try a Côtes-de-Provence rosé Mas de Gourgonnier (\$10).

Crisp, tangy white wines from Italy are another good choice. Try the 2001 Palazzone Orvieto Classico (\$12) or the 2001 La Cadalaria Pinot Grigio (\$14). A New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc would also

fit the bill: try the 2002 from Mantua (\$14).

Reds are an option, too—as long as they're light, crisp, and fruity. Look to France for wines like these. A chilled Beaujolais-Villages like the 2001 "Le Pot" from Louis Tête (\$10) would suit, as would a chilled 2001

Chinon from Château de la Bonnelière. Light Pinot Noir would work, too. I like Firesteed from Oregon (\$10) or Beringer North Coast (\$16).

Tim Gaiser, a contributing editor to Fine Cooking, is a master sommelier.

For Juicy Grilled Shrimp Cook It in the Shell

To capture those sweet, salty
nuances, grill shrimp quickly
with the shell on



BY ELIZABETH KARMEL

Growing up in North Carolina, it was impossible not to love shrimp. We ate it year-round in everything from classic shrimp cocktail to shrimp and grits. But my favorite way of preparing shrimp was—and still is—grilling it. Grilling is an ideal way to cook shrimp because shrimp needs quick high heat to keep it juicy and flavorful. The only danger with this fast and easy method is overcooking. But if you stick to my advice to grill shrimp in the shell (rather than peeling it first) and to monitor it closely, you'll discover how succulent grilled shrimp can be.

Grilling shrimp in the shell keeps all those delicious juices from escaping, guaranteeing much tastier, moister meat. In fact, I'm such a fan of this method that I grill most of my shrimp this way, even if I'm using them in another dish, like the Grilled Shrimp Margarita on p. 45. It's easy to add flavor to shell-on shrimp; toss them in olive oil and spice or salt rubs before grilling and then serve them with a dipping sauce or two. If you're worried that your guests might not want to fuss with shells, don't be: Peeling shrimp is a great icebreaker.

For truly juicy shrimp, choose the biggest size and grill them fast

When it comes to grilling shrimp, bigger is better: Large or jumbo shrimp stay juicy on the grill; small shrimp can dry out too quickly—or fall through the grate. When you shop for shrimp, you'll notice they're labeled two ways: by size—such as jumbo, large,

medium, small—and by count (how many shrimp per pound), such as 10–15, 15–30, and 30–41. Since neither counts nor size labels are consistent from one store to the next, buy shrimp by weight. You'll need $\frac{1}{2}$ pound of shrimp per person for a main-course serving. (People aren't shy about taking second helpings of shrimp, so err on the generous side.) Choose the biggest shrimp you can afford, regardless of how it's labeled.

Oil the shrimp first and grill directly over a medium-hot fire. The grill—and the grates—



Big shrimp cook best on the grill. To avoid overcooking, flip them when the flesh on the bottom is mostly opaque and the shell is tinged with pink.

Salt & Pepper Crusted Shrimp with Two Dipping Sauces

Serves four as a main dish or six as a side dish.

For this recipe, don't use "easy-peel" shrimp—meaning shrimp whose shells have been split down the back—as too much salt would get into the shrimp meat. If you can't find any other shrimp, cut the salt in half. I also recommend using the largest shrimp you can buy, so that the ratio of salt and pepper to shrimp is well balanced.

FOR THE LEMON-BASIL DIPPING SAUCE:

Finely grated zest and juice of 1 large lemon
1 large clove garlic, smashed and peeled
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup best-quality extra-virgin olive oil
8 large fresh basil leaves, chopped

FOR THE BUTTER SAUCE:
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup unsalted butter, melted

2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
Garlic powder

FOR THE SHRIMP:

2 pounds jumbo shrimp in the shell (24 to 30; not "easy-peel"), thawed completely if frozen and blotted dry
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons kosher salt (I prefer Morton brand for crusting) or coarse sea salt
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons coarsely ground black pepper

Heat a gas grill to medium-high or prepare a medium-hot charcoal fire. (If using

charcoal, be sure the grate is hot, too.) While the grill is heating, make the sauces. For the lemon-basil sauce, combine all the ingredients in a small bowl; mix well and let sit to macerate. For the butter sauce, put the melted butter in a small heatproof bowl. Stir in the Worcestershire sauce and several shakes of garlic powder.

When the grill is hot, blot the shrimp dry and put them in a large bowl.

Toss with the oil to coat lightly. Immediately before grilling, mix the salt and pepper and sprinkle evenly over the shrimp; toss to coat thoroughly. Put the shrimp directly on the grate and grill, turning once, until the shells are pink and the flesh is opaque, about 6 minutes total. When cool enough to touch, serve the shrimp in the shells to peel with your fingers and dip into the sauces.

must be hot before you start cooking. So give your gas grill plenty of time to heat up (at least 10 minutes) or wait until your charcoal is covered with a white-hot ash before you start. While you're waiting, coat the shrimp with olive or vegetable oil, which helps seal in juices and keeps the shrimp from sticking to the grill.

Keep a timer with you. Shrimp cooks really quickly—anywhere from 4 to 8 minutes, depending on the size—so pay close attention. During grilling, the shrimp liquids become milky in color and the flesh opaque, with the telltale sign of pink accents. Cook each side until it just turns opaque. Waiting for the shrimp to curl isn't a good idea, as it's overcooked by then, and all those sweet, slightly salty nuances that make it universally loved are gone. You'll definitely know your shrimp is overcooked if the shell sticks to the meat. When grilled properly, the shell will come off neatly and cleanly.



Grilled Old Bay Shrimp with Lemony Horseradish Cocktail Sauce

*Serves six as a starter;
yields 2½ cups sauce.*

Old Bay seasoning is a spice mix sold in grocery stores (look for the bright yellow tin), or see p. 76 for sources. Serve these addictive shrimp with cold beer or sweet iced tea. Spread the shrimp out on newspapers and invite your guests to “peel and eat.” The cocktail sauce will keep for a week, refrigerated.

FOR THE SAUCE:

2 cups tomato ketchup
Grated zest of 2 small lemons
Juice of both lemons (about 5 tablespoons)
4 heaping tablespoons prepared horseradish; more to taste
8 shakes Tabasco or other hot sauce; more to taste
½ teaspoon sea salt or kosher salt
Freshly ground pepper (optional)

FOR THE SHRIMP:

2 pounds jumbo shrimp in the shell (24 to 30), thawed completely if frozen and blotted dry
¼ cup vegetable or olive oil
2 tablespoons Old Bay seasoning
½ cup salted butter, melted (optional)

In a medium bowl, combine the ketchup, lemon zest and juice, horseradish, Tabasco, salt, and

pepper, if using. Taste and adjust the seasonings, adding more horseradish if you like. Refrigerate if not using right away.

Heat a gas grill to medium high or prepare a medium-hot charcoal fire. (If using charcoal, be sure the grate is hot, too.) Just before cooking, toss the shrimp in the oil to coat, sprinkle with the Old Bay, and toss to coat

evenly (I like to do this in a zip-top bag).

Put the shrimp on the grate directly over the heat and cook for 6 to 7 minutes, turning once halfway through. The shrimp are done when the shells are bright pink and the meat is opaque. Pile the shrimp on newspapers to peel and serve with the cocktail sauce, melted butter (if using), and lots of paper towels.

Getting shrimp ready for the grill

- ❖ **Thaw shrimp just before cooking.** It's best to buy shrimp frozen (see the box at far right) since their texture deteriorates quite quickly once thawed. The best way to do this is to put them in a colander and run cold water over them until thawed.
- ❖ **Devein or not—it's up to you.** A lot of shrimp is sold

already deveined, either deliberately or because the vein often comes out naturally when the heads are removed. The vein won't hurt you, but it's sometimes unsightly and a bit gritty. If you want to devein your shrimp, try my easy method below.

- ❖ **Make your own “easy-peel” shrimp.** If the shrimp haven't already been slit down the

back for faster peeling, you can do it yourself after they're thawed. Hold a shrimp between your thumb and forefinger at the top of the (head-off) shrimp and use kitchen shears to snip down the spine, stopping at the tail. At this point, you can easily remove the vein by picking it up in the middle and pulling it out with the tip of the shears or a paring knife.



Grilled Shrimp “Margarita” with Avocados & Garden Tomatoes

Serves four to six.

1 pound large shrimp in the shell (about 24), thawed completely if frozen and blotted dry
2 tablespoons olive oil
¼ cup good-quality tequila
¼ cup fresh lime juice
¼ cup fresh orange juice
2 tablespoons tomato ketchup
2 tablespoons green Tabasco or other jalapeño hot sauce
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

2 cups diced ripe heirloom or garden tomatoes, drained (from about 3 medium tomatoes)
2 medium to large ripe avocados, peeled, pitted, and diced
1 bunch scallions (green tops only), thinly sliced
1 small white onion, finely diced (optional)
Lime wedges for garnish
Coarse sea salt (optional; I like French fleur de sel, see p. 76 for sources)
Saltine crackers

Heat a gas grill to medium high or prepare a medium-hot charcoal fire. (If using charcoal, be sure the grate is hot, too.) Put the shrimp in a large bowl and mix with the olive oil until well coated. Put the shrimp on the grate directly over the heat and grill until pink and almost cooked through, 4 to 5 minutes, turning once halfway through. Let cool completely.

An hour before serving, whisk together

For the freshest tasting shrimp, buy it quick-frozen

Because there's a lot of variation in quality, it helps to know what to look for when shopping for shrimp.

BEST BET: Ice Blocks

The best shrimp are flash frozen in blocks of water like giant ice cubes within hours of pulling in the net. This is the best way to preserve the flavor and texture of the shrimp—it seals the shrimp and prevents it from getting freezer burn. If you can buy a block of shrimp from your fishmonger (usually 4- or 5-pound blocks), that's the best way. (For excellent mail-order shrimp, see p. 76).

NEXT BEST: IQF Bags

Your next best bet is buying frozen unpeeled shrimp in a bag and thawing it yourself (see the sidebar on the opposite page). Your grocery store or fishmonger will have bags of frozen shrimp. If you don't see them, ask. Most likely, this shrimp has been individually quick frozen (IQF) and is just as fresh as the ice-block shrimp, just not as protected from freezer burn. So check for excessive ice crystals.

LAST CHOICE: Fish counter

Unless you live where shrimp is caught locally, the shrimp that's beautifully displayed at the fish counter won't be fresh; it will have been previously frozen and conveniently thawed for you—but the problem is that you don't know how it was thawed, nor for how long. If this appears to be your only option, take the time to ask: The store may have some of the very same shrimp in the back that they haven't yet thawed. Ask for that instead.

the tequila, lime juice, orange juice, ketchup, and green Tabasco. Peel the shrimp, cut them into large pieces (about ½ inch), and toss with the tequila mixture. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour. Just before serving, season the shrimp mixture with salt and pepper. (Alternatively, omit the kosher salt at this stage and sprinkle on a coarse sea salt like fleur de sel just before serving.) Gently fold in the toma-

atoes, avocados, and scallions, mixing well. Using a slotted spoon, portion the mixture into individual serving bowls or margarita glasses. Garnish with a sprinkling of onion (if using), a wedge of lime, and the optional sea salt. Serve immediately with the crackers.

Elizabeth Karmel is the creator of GirlsattheGrill.com. ♦

Refreshing Granitas

No special equipment needed—
just stir and scrape to make
these easy, icy fruit desserts


BY NICOLE PLUE

Simply put, a granita is shaved ice. The name comes from the Italian word for “grainy,” because, unlike sorbets, granitas are supposed to be coarse, crunchy, and slushy—not smooth. But granitas are more than just shaved ice; they’re a beautiful, easy way to get a bracing taste of fresh fruit. The technique I use couldn’t be easier: make a sweetened fruit purée (or use a flavorful liquid, like wine), freeze and stir, then shave and serve.

The ideal granita has a clean, intense taste, so you need to start with a flavorful base. For fresh-fruit granitas, use the ripest produce you can find. And since almost all fruits taste better with a bit of citrus, I always add a splash of lemon, lime, or orange juice. I sometimes use other acids, like balsamic vinegar, to heighten flavor.

Every base will need a little sugar to sweeten it and to create the perfect slushy texture. Since sweetness is diminished by cold, make the fruit purée or liquid sweeter than you want the final product to be. But be careful to strike the right balance: adding too much sugar will prevent the base from freezing properly.

Make these granitas a day ahead to allow for the freezing process (see the box at right). Then serve them as a light ending to a summer meal—brunch, lunch, or dinner—or as a cooling afternoon treat.



Granita flavors, clockwise
from top: Sangria, Strawberry-
Balsamic, Mango-Lime,
Pink Lemonade, Watermelon.

1-2-3 Freezing Process

1. Pour the base mixture from one of the recipes at right into a 9-inch-square shallow baking pan. This pan size works best because it provides a large surface area, a key point in speeding up the freezing process. To further hasten freezing, use a metal pan (metal conducts cold well).

2. Put the pan in the freezer and stir every 30 minutes, being sure to scrape the ice crystals off the sides and into the middle of the pan, until the mixture is too frozen to stir, about 3 hours, depending on the individual recipe and on how cold your freezer is (some granitas can freeze in as little as 1 hour). Use a large dinner fork to stir and scrape; the tines are perfect for breaking up ice crystals.

3. Cover the pan with plastic and freeze overnight. When ready to serve the granita, place a fork at the top of the dish and pull it toward you in rows, moving from left to right and rotating the pan as well. Scrape up the shaved ice and fill your chilled glasses or bowls.



Watermelon Granita

Yields about 8 cups scraped granita; serves sixteen.

3 pounds seedless watermelon
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup granulated sugar
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons fresh lime juice

Remove the rind from the watermelon and discard. Chop the flesh into $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch pieces; you should have about 5 cups of fruit. Purée the watermelon in a blender, in batches if necessary, until smooth. Strain through a fine sieve and discard the pulp; you should have 4 cups of juice. Add the sugar and lime juice to the watermelon juice. Stir with a large spoon or whisk until the sugar has thoroughly dissolved. Follow the 1-2-3 Freezing Process at left.

Pink Lemonade Granita

Yields about 4 cups scraped granita; serves eight.

$1\frac{1}{2}$ cups water
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup plus 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup fresh lemon juice (from 3 to 4 lemons)
2 teaspoons grenadine

Combine the water, sugar, lemon juice, and grenadine in a medium bowl. Stir with a large spoon or whisk until the sugar has thoroughly dissolved, about 1 minute. Follow the 1-2-3 Freezing Process at left.

Sangria Granita

Yields about 2 cups scraped granita; serves six to eight.

The wine's flavor comes through intensely in this granita, so serve smaller portions.

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup full-bodied red wine, such as Merlot or Cabernet
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup plus 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh orange juice
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

Combine the red wine, water, and sugar in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium heat. Boil for 1 minute. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the orange juice and lemon juice. Let cool and then follow the 1-2-3 Freezing Process at left.

Strawberry-Balsamic Granita

Yields about 6 cups scraped granita; serves twelve.

The balsamic vinegar supplies a depth of flavor and sweetness to this granita.

10 ounces ripe strawberries (about 1 pint), rinsed and cored
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup plus $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons granulated sugar
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups water
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons high-quality balsamic vinegar

Cut each berry into quarters; you should have about 2 cups lightly packed fruit. In a food processor, combine the strawberries and sugar and process until smooth, about 1 minute. Transfer the purée to a medium bowl. Add the water and vinegar and stir well to combine. Follow the 1-2-3 Freezing Process at left.

Mango-Lime Granita

Yields about 8 cups scraped granita; serves sixteen.

$1\frac{1}{2}$ ripe mangos ($1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds total), peeled
1 teaspoon finely grated lime zest
2 cups water
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup granulated sugar
1 tablespoon fresh lime juice

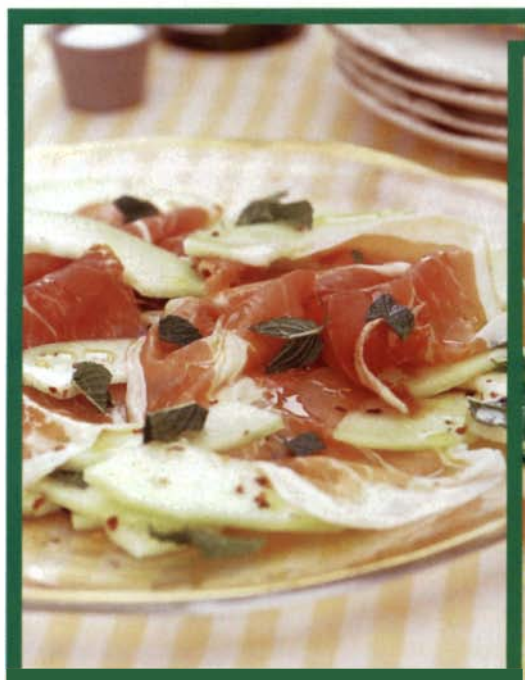
Cut the mango flesh away from the pit and chop coarsely into 1-inch pieces; you should have 2 to $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups packed fruit. In a food processor, combine the mango and lime zest. Process until completely smooth, 1 to 2 minutes, stopping to scrape down the sides with a rubber spatula as needed. Transfer the purée to a medium bowl and add the water, sugar, and lime juice. Stir with a large spoon or whisk until the sugar has thoroughly dissolved. Follow the 1-2-3 Freezing Process at left.

Nicole Plue is a pastry chef who lives in New York City. ♦

For relaxed entertaining, make a variety of colorful salads and side dishes ahead and then serve them family-style

BY CRAIG STOLL

A Casual



**Prosciutto with
Marinated Melon**



**Grilled Corn Salad with Tomatoes,
Arugula & Ricotta Salata**



**Grilled Eggplant
Marinated with Mint**

I spend most of my waking hours obsessing over the food at my restaurant. So when I cook at home, I like to stay away from fussy preparations. In the summer, this means cooking in the Italian antipasto tradition—big bowls and platters of room-temperature dishes that can be set out on the table and served family-style.

I made up this menu with an Italian flavor palette and an eye toward what's fresh at the market in late summer. I chose simple, seasonal flavors so that one or two ingredients could shine in each dish, without overpowering any others in the meal.

Italian inspiration, summer fare. Chicken salad might not be the first dish you think of when you think “Italian,” but with crunchy fennel, tangy olives, and toasted garlic, this salad takes on a distinctly Mediterranean personality. Eggplant is at its best in late summer, and I like to slice it into thin disks, grill them until soft and browned, and then marinate them in a garlicky dressing. I love pairing the delicate flavor of calamari with bright ingredients like basil and lemon juice; zucchini and meaty chickpeas give the salad contrasting textures, too. If you can't get (or don't like) fresh cala-

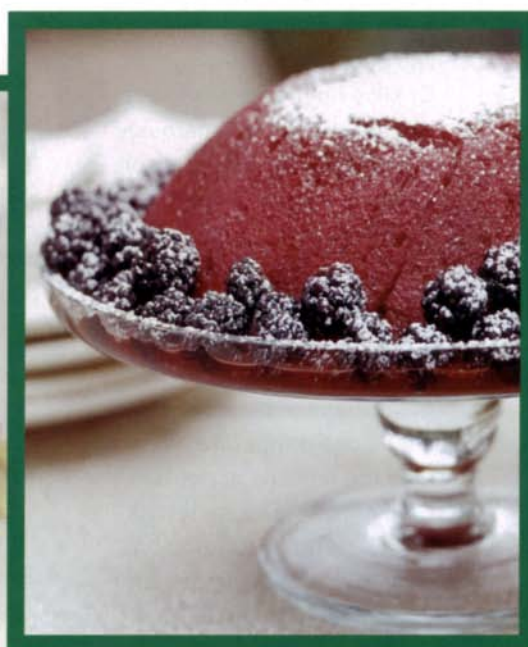
Antipasto Party



Chickpea, Calamari & Zucchini Salad



Roasted Chicken Salad with Fennel & Black Olives



Summer Berry Pudding with Moscato Whipped Cream

mari, shrimp is a good substitute. Fresh corn is virtually unused in Italy, but here, I'm influenced by my northern California surroundings. I grill whole corn cobs, slice off the kernels, and toss them with a salad of arugula and tomatoes with a shallot vinaigrette. And while I do like simple flavors, I can't resist giving a little kick—in the form of mint, chiles, and lime juice—to the beautiful combination of prosciutto and ripe melon.

For a spectacular followup to the meal, I make a summer berry pudding. I admit the inspiration for this dessert comes from Britain, where summer puddings are

traditional, but the bright, seasonal flavors of the dessert are in line with the rest of the meal. And since the pudding must be made a day ahead, it means one less thing to do at the last minute. In fact, many of the dishes here can be partially or mostly made ahead. I've laid out a strategy on p. 50 for preparing the food so you can relax with your friends when the party starts.

Do remember that while the dishes in this menu go together wonderfully, you needn't make them all. Feel free to prepare as many of the dishes as fit your occasion and your schedule.

Make a menu of favorites

Depending on how many people you're serving, you might want to vary the number of dishes you prepare from this menu. All the dishes together would generously serve about ten people. For a smaller crowd, make two or three of the antipasti. You can also substitute your own favorites for some of the dishes in this menu. Arrange a platter of grilled vegetables like peppers, onions, or corn. Or slice ripe tomatoes thinly and season them generously with fresh herbs and olive oil. For a quick stand-in for the summer pudding, slice fresh fruit and top it with the Moscato whipped cream. If you do decide to make the whole menu, you'll want to make many of the dishes ahead and refrigerate them (see the timeline at right). Cold mutes flavor, so let the dishes sit out for a good half hour to let their flavors perk up, and taste them for seasoning before serving.

Cooking in the Italian spirit isn't about slavishly following recipes but rather about finding good, fresh ingredients, preparing them simply, and seasoning them well.

timeline

Up to two days before:

Make the mayonnaise for the roasted chicken salad (if using homemade); see p. 72.

Make and assemble the summer berry pudding.

Up to a day before:

Roast the chicken and shred the meat.

Grill and marinate the eggplant.

Grill the corn, make the shallot vinaigrette, and wash the arugula.

Make the calamari salad.

Gather serving platters, bowls, and spoons.

The day of the party:

Soak the onion and assemble the chicken salad.

Peel and slice the melon.

Slice the tomatoes for the corn salad.

Thirty to forty-five minutes before serving:

Bring the calamari and eggplant salads to room temperature.

Just before serving:

Dress the melon with the lime juice and mint and top with the prosciutto.

Dress and toss the corn salad with the vinaigrette and ricotta salata.

Whip the cream for the summer berry pudding.

Unmold the summer pudding.



Grilled Corn Salad with Cherry Tomatoes, Arugula & Ricotta Salata

Serves six to eight as part of a buffet.

5 ears corn, unhusked
1 shallot, finely chopped
1 tablespoon Champagne vinegar or white-wine vinegar
2 tablespoons sherry vinegar
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil
2 to 3 bunches arugula (about 1/2 pound), stemmed, or 1/4 pound baby arugula
1 cup cherry tomatoes
2 ounces ricotta salata

Heat a gas grill to medium high or prepare a medium-hot charcoal fire. Remove the thick, outer leaves of the corn husk. Peel back the inner leaves, being careful to leave them attached to the cob. Remove as much of the corn silk as possible and then fold the inner leaves back over the corn. It's fine if some of the kernels show through gaps in the leaves.

Once the fire is hot, put the corn on the grate, cover the grill, and cook, flipping often, until the husk is very charred and some of the kernels are browned and feel cooked when pressed with a fingernail, 10 to 15 minutes. Set aside to cool.

Combine the shallot, Champagne or white-wine vinegar, and sherry vinegar in a medium bowl. Season with salt and pepper and let

macerate for 20 minutes. Whisk in the oil. Taste and adjust the seasonings; set aside.

Meanwhile, wash and dry the arugula. Put it in a bowl, cover with a damp paper towel, and refrigerate.

Shuck the corn and wipe it off well, making sure no flecks of charred husk or corn silk cling to it. Cut the kernels off the cob and put them in a large salad bowl. Cut each cherry tomato in half from stem to tip and set aside (don't refrigerate).

To assemble the salad: Pour some of the the vinaigrette over the corn and toss well. Gently toss in the arugula and tomatoes, drizzle with the remaining vinaigrette, and season with a little salt and pepper. Crumble the ricotta salata over the salad and serve.



Chickpea, Calamari & Zucchini Salad

Serves eight to ten as part of a buffet.

If you buy whole, uncleaned squid, buy 1 1/3 to 1 1/2 pounds and see p. 72 for cleaning instructions. Shrimp can be substituted for the squid, if you like.

1 pound cleaned calamari (squid) tentacles and bodies

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Pinch crushed red chile flakes

3/4 cup good-quality extra-virgin olive oil

2 medium cloves garlic

1/2 pound small zucchini, cut in half lengthwise and then sliced into 3/8-inch half moons (about 2 cups)

Juice of 1 lemon (about 1/4 cup); more as needed

4 cups cooked chickpeas (or two 19-ounce cans), rinsed and drained

1/2 small red onion, thinly sliced into half moons and soaked in ice water for 1 hour

2 tablespoons chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

12 fresh basil leaves, torn into small pieces

Clean the squid as described in *From Our Test Kitchen*, p. 72. Slice the bodies lengthwise into 1/4-inch strips. Put the strips and the cleaned tentacles into separate bowls and season each evenly with salt, pepper, chile flakes, and 2 tablespoons of the oil. Set aside.

Smash the garlic and a pinch of salt into a paste following the directions in the sidebar at right. Whisk the garlic with 1/2 cup of the olive oil in a small bowl. Season well with salt and pepper.

Bring 1 quart of salted water to a boil in a medium saucepan. Add the zucchini and cook until just tender, 3 to 4 minutes. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the zucchini to a plate to cool. Sprinkle with salt and drizzle with 1 tablespoon olive oil.

In the same pot of boiling water, cook the squid strips until they become just firm to the tooth, about 1 minute. Transfer with a slotted spoon to a large plate to cool. Cook the tentacles the same way but for about 90 seconds; drain and add to the strips. Sprinkle with salt and drizzle on one-quarter of the lemon juice and the remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil.

In a large, shallow bowl, combine the chickpeas, zucchini, and calamari. Drain the soaking onions, dry briefly on paper towels, and add to the chickpeas. Add the garlic oil, the remaining lemon juice, the parsley, and the basil and toss. Taste for salt and pepper.

Let the salad marinate for 1 hour at room temperature before serving. You can also refrigerate the salad for up to a day ahead, but make sure it comes to room temperature before serving and taste for salt, pepper, lemon, and chile flakes.

Roasted Chicken Salad with Fennel & Black Olives

Serves eight to ten as part of a buffet.

3 1/2-pound whole chicken, rinsed and dried

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

3 cloves garlic, chopped

1/2 cup homemade mayonnaise (see the recipe on p. 72) or store-bought mayonnaise seasoned with fresh lemon juice; more as needed

2 medium heads fennel, trimmed, halved, and cut lengthwise into 1/8-inch slices

6 inner ribs celery, cut into 1/8-inch slices

1/2 cup oil-cured black olives, rinsed, patted dry, pitted, and coarsely chopped

3 tablespoons chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

Finely grated zest of 2 lemons

1 small red onion, halved, thinly sliced into half moons, and soaked in ice water for 1 hour

(Recipe continues)



Mashing garlic to a paste

Trim off the ends of the garlic cloves and slice the cloves in half lengthwise. Turn the cloves flat side down on the cutting board. Lay the side of the blade of a chef's knife on each clove and smash down with the heel of your palm. Sprinkle the garlic with kosher salt and chop coarsely. Pile the chopped garlic on one side of the board. Tilt the knife at a 30-degree angle to the board and drag it over the garlic, scraping it across the surface of the board. Pile up the garlic again, sprinkle lightly with salt, and scrape again. Repeat once or twice until the garlic is a smooth paste (shown below).





wine choices

Try light, easy-drinking wines for this menu

For a casual menu like this one, why not open a few different bottles? Here are some pairings that I think work especially well.

The prosciutto with marinated melon offers a unique wine pairing challenge in the form of saltiness from the prosciutto, spiciness from chile flakes, and tartness from the lime juice. The answer to this vinous riddle comes in the form of a delightfully fruity sparkler called Prosecco, from Italy's Veneto region. The wine's ripe fruit, bubbles, and crisp acidity are just the right combination, not to mention a good value. Try the Bele Casel Prosecco di Valdobbiadene (\$15) or the Mionetto Prosecco di Valdobbiadene (\$14). With the chickpeas, calamari, and zucchini salad, try a zesty, herbaceous Sauvignon Blanc like the 2002 Villa Maria from the Marlborough region of New Zealand (\$14), or the 2001 Frog's Leap from Napa Valley (\$15). For the chicken salad, a light- to medium-bodied red with fresh, supple fruit and bright acidity is the right match. Barbera comes to mind; two of the best I've recently tasted are the 2001 Correggia Barbera d'Alba (\$16) and the 2000 Vietti Barbera d'Asti "Tre Vigne" (\$16).

As long as you have a bottle of Moscato open for the whipped cream to accompany the summer pudding, go ahead and pour a glass for dessert; you can't go wrong with this utterly charming bubbly. The 2001 Bera Moscato d'Asti (\$9) and the 2002 Bonny Doon Moscato del Solo Frizzante (\$14) are two of my current favorites.

Tim Gaiser, a contributing editor to Fine Cooking, is a master sommelier.

Up to a day before serving, roast the chicken: Heat the oven to 375°F. Massage salt and pepper all around the cavity of the chicken and on the skin of the bird. Drizzle with 2 tablespoons of the olive oil and rub that in as well. Set the chicken on a rack in a shallow roasting pan and roast until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thickest part of the thigh reads 170° to 175°F, or the juices run clear, about 75 minutes. Remove from the oven and let cool to room temperature. Pick the meat off the chicken. By hand, shred the meat into bite-size pieces along the grain of the meat. Discard any skin, bones, or cartilage (or save for stock). If working ahead, wrap the meat tightly and refrigerate.

The day of the party, assemble the salad: In a small saucepan, combine the remaining 3 tablespoons oil with the chopped garlic. Heat slowly until the garlic begins to brown, 4 to 5 minutes. Pour into a small bowl to cool. The garlic should be lightly toasted.

In a large mixing bowl, combine the shredded chicken with the mayonnaise and toss gently. Add the fennel, celery, olives, parsley, lemon zest, and toasted garlic with its oil. Drain the onions, dry them on a towel, and add them to the salad. If the salad seems dry, add more mayonnaise. Taste and adjust the seasonings. Put the salad on a platter or in a serving bowl. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate. Serve cold.



Prosciutto with Marinated Melon

Serves eight to ten.

1 medium (4-pound) ripe honeydew melon
(or any kind of melon except watermelon)
Juice of ½ lime
½ teaspoon crushed red chile flakes
¼ teaspoon kosher salt
4 mint leaves, torn into small pieces

6 ounces paper-thin slices prosciutto di Parma or prosciutto San Danielle
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

Cut off the stem and blossom ends of the melon. Stand the melon on one cut end and slice off the remaining rind. Cut the melon in half lengthwise from stem to blossom end and scoop out the seeds. Halve each melon half, so that you have four long wedges. Slice the wedges crosswise about ¼ inch thick. Gently toss the melon in a bowl with the lime juice, chile flakes, salt, and half of the mint. Arrange on a platter, drape the prosciutto on top, and drizzle with the olive oil. Sprinkle with the remaining mint and serve immediately.

Grilled Eggplant Marinated with Mint

Serves eight to ten.

2 small globe eggplant (about 1¾ pounds total)
¾ cup extra-virgin olive oil
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 cloves garlic
1½ tablespoons fresh lemon juice or red-wine vinegar
⅓ cup loosely packed chopped fresh mint leaves (from about ¼ bunch)

Heat a gas grill to medium high or prepare a medium-hot charcoal fire.

Using a serrated knife or a mandoline, slice the eggplant into rounds as thin as possible, about ¼ to ⅛ inch. Spread the sliced eggplant (you may have to overlap them slightly) on two large baking sheets. Brush the tops with ½ cup of the oil and season with salt and pepper.

Smash the garlic and a pinch of salt into a paste following the directions on p. 51. In a small bowl, whisk together the remaining ¼ cup oil and the garlic paste. Whisk in the lemon juice or vinegar and season with salt and pepper.

Once the fire is hot, grill both sides of the eggplant (in batches if necessary) until softened and cooked through, about 2 minutes per side. It's fine if it chars slightly.

Transfer the eggplant to a medium serving bowl, add the garlic oil, and toss gently so as not to tear the eggplant. Let marinate for at least 15 minutes and up to 2 hours at room temperature (or refrigerate for up to 24 hours, but bring to room temperature before serving). Toss in the mint just before serving.

The summer pudding gets layered and weighted



Summer Berry Pudding with Moscato Whipped Cream

Serves eight to twelve.

FOR THE PUDDING:

4 pints strawberries (about 2 pounds)

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup granulated sugar

2 to 3 pints assorted berries (blackberries, raspberries, and blueberries); more for garnish

Juice of 1 orange (about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup)

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

2 tablespoons Grand Marnier, Framboise, or other liqueur

1 pound fine-crumbed sliced white bread (about 20 slices, $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick; Pepperidge Farm is fine), crusts removed

FOR THE WHIPPED CREAM:

1 cup heavy cream

2 tablespoons cold Moscato D'Asti (or any other sparkling dessert wine)

1 tablespoon granulated sugar

At least a day before serving, make the summer pudding: Coat the inside of an 8- or 9-inch-diameter bowl with oil or non-stick cooking spray. Line the bowl with plastic wrap, smoothing out the wrinkles as much as possible and leaving a little bit of wrap hanging over the edge of the bowl.

Rinse, hull, and quarter the strawberries; toss with the $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar. Cook in a heavy-based, nonreactive saucepan over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until the strawberries begin to break down and give up their juices, about 5 minutes. Stir in the remaining mixed berries and cook, stirring occasionally, until the berries are tender and crush easily against the side of the pan, about 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and let cool slightly. Stir in the orange juice, lemon juice, and liqueur. Taste and add more of any ingredient if necessary. Position a strainer or colander over a large bowl to reserve the juices. Drain the berries and transfer them to a small bowl.

Set 5 slices of the bread on the bottom and up the sides of the bowl in the shape of a plus sign. **1** Trim more slices of bread into triangles to fill in the sides. **2** Dip each of these bread slices into the berry juice to saturate them and then reposition them in the bowl. **3** Gently spread about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the berries over the bread in the bottom of bowl. **4** Trim more bread to completely cover the berries. Soak the bread and reposition it. Spread about half the remaining berries on the bread. Repeat the trimming, soaking, and positioning of the bread. Spread on a last layer of the remaining berries and cover with a final layer of trimmed, soaked bread; this last layer should be level with the bread lining the bowl. Reserve any remaining berry juice in the refrigerator.

Cover the top of the pudding with plastic wrap. **5** Top with a plate or cardboard round and weight the plate with heavy boxes or cans or a closed container filled with water. Set the bowl on a rimmed baking sheet and chill overnight.

Shortly before serving, whip the cream:

With an electric hand mixer or a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, whip the cream with the Moscato and sugar until it forms soft peaks.

To serve: Remove the weights, plate, and plastic from the top of the pudding and spread the plastic wrap lining out to the sides. Set a rimmed serving platter face down on top of the bowl and invert the bowl over onto the platter; remove the bowl and plastic wrap. Garnish with fresh berries, if you like. Serve slices of the pudding with the whipped cream and a drizzle of the remaining berry juice.

Craig Stoll is the chef and co-owner of Delfina restaurant in San Francisco. ♦



A photograph of four white ceramic bowls filled with a smooth, orange-colored soup. The bowls are arranged in a slightly overlapping cluster on a wooden surface. Each bowl is garnished with a small sprig of fresh green herb and several small, light-colored seeds. The background is softly blurred, showing more of the same bowls and some kitchen items like a spoon and a bowl.

Stay cool with a trio of Summer Soups

BY MOLLY STEVENS

Spices, citrus, and
fresh herbs give
classic cold soups
a fresh personality

With their bright flavors and bold colors, cold soups let you take full advantage of the great garden vegetables available this time of year. They're convenient, too: I love the fact that they must be made in advance, so there's no last-minute simmering to heat up the kitchen. And I really appreciate their versatility—perfect as a starter to an outdoor meal from the grill or lovely on their own as a refreshingly light lunch or supper.

The best chilled soups start with the best vegetables, so let them be your guide. My inspiration comes from whatever catches my eye at the farmstand or market—pristine cucumbers, bright-orange carrots with their feathery tops attached, freshly dug beets. The freshest vegetables will feel heavy in your hand (older vegetables lose moisture and weigh less) and will carry a pleasant fragrance of earth.

Light broth (or even water) lets a cold soup's flavor shine through

In general, it's best to use milder, lighter liquids for chilled soups than you would for warm ones; you want the flavor of the main ingredients to shine through and not be masked by a strong-flavored broth. Opt for light chicken broth, buttermilk, yogurt, coconut milk, fruit or vegetable juices, or even water.

A food processor or a blender makes quick work of putting together a chilled soup. Unlike gazpacho (which is typically a rather chunky cold soup), the soups here get much of their flavor and texture from being puréed. A blender will give you a slightly smoother texture than a processor. Unless you have a professional-capacity blender, you'll have to work in batches. Also, be sure any cooked vegetables you use are completely tender before puréeing. Under-

(Continued)



Chilled Curried Carrot Soup

Yields about 5 cups; serves four.

Most supermarkets carry Madras-style curry powder, which is the type I recommend. I suggest buying a new can at least every six months—curry powder loses much of its punch over time. The $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon curry powder here will give you a fragrant soup with mild warmth. If you like things spicier, just add a bit more.

2 tablespoons unsalted butter or vegetable oil
1 pound carrots, peeled and thinly sliced
1 medium onion, chopped
1 large shallot, sliced
2 cloves garlic, chopped
1 heaping tablespoon minced fresh ginger
1 teaspoon seeded and minced fresh serrano or jalapeño (about $\frac{1}{2}$ a medium-size chile)
1 teaspoon ground coriander
 $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon Madras-style hot curry powder
Kosher salt
3 cups homemade or low-salt canned chicken broth or water
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup coconut milk
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons fresh lime juice; more to taste
Freshly ground black or white pepper
Fresh cilantro leaves for garnish
Toasted pepitas or pine nuts for garnish

Heat the butter or oil in a wide soup pot over medium heat. Add the carrots, onion, and shallot and cook, stirring occasionally, until slightly softened, about 6 minutes. Add the garlic, ginger, chile, coriander, curry powder, and a generous pinch of salt. Cook until fragrant, another minute. Pour in the chicken broth, cover partially, and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat and simmer gently until the vegetables offer no resistance when mashed against the side of the pot with a wooden spoon, 25 to 35 minutes. Remove from the heat.

Ladle some solids and broth into a blender, taking care to fill the jar no more than two-thirds full. Before turning on the blender vent the lid by removing the pop-out center if there is one, or just open the lid a bit. (Venting prevents the heat from building up inside the blender, which could cause hot soup to spew out all over the kitchen.) For extra precaution, drape a clean dishtowel over the vented lid as well. Purée the soup in batches if needed and then strain through a medium sieve. Stir in the coconut milk and lime juice; season to taste with salt and pepper. Chill thoroughly. Before serving, thin the soup gradually as needed with up to 1 cup of water and adjust the seasonings. Ladle the soup into bowls or cups. Garnish with a few cilantro leaves and the pepitas or pine nuts.

Pepitas—olive-green hulled pumpkin seeds—have a delicate, sweet flavor that comes alive when lightly toasted.

cooked vegetables will give the soup a gritty, chewy texture.

Give cold soups time to chill completely; count on at least three hours in the refrigerator for one batch of soup. As the soup chills, the flavors will meld, and the soup may thicken. Just before serving, check the soup and adjust it if need be. To thin a cold soup, I generally use plain cool water, adding just a little at a time.

Don't be shy when seasoning chilled soups.

Chilling mutes flavors, so even if you fully season the soup before chilling, you'll need to taste it again and adjust before serving. Most cold soups benefit from a good shot of bracing acidity, like citrus juice or vinegar, which will help to brighten flavors. Before ladling a chilled soup into serving bowls, let it sit at room temperature for about 10 minutes to take off some of the chill. Though not essential, this can improve the flavor, especially if your refrigerator is very cold.

Cucumber-Yogurt Soup with Avocado

Yields about 6 cups; serves four.

This gorgeous, no-cook soup is quickly made in the food processor. Chill it for at least 3 hours before serving. As the soup chills, the flavors meld and the texture becomes smoother.

- 1 large (8-ounce) white onion**
(preferably sweet), peeled and quartered
- 1 pound cucumbers, peeled, seeded, and cut into big chunks**
- 1 medium-size ripe avocado**
- 1½ cups plain yogurt** (preferably whole-milk)
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**
- 1 to 2 cloves garlic, minced**
- ¾ teaspoon ground cumin** (preferably toasted and freshly ground)
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt; more to taste**
- ⅓ cup loosely packed fresh basil leaves**
- 2 tablespoons fresh mint leaves**
- 2 to 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice**
- Freshly ground black pepper**

Put the onion chunks in the food processor; pulse to chop finely. Scoop into a sieve, rinse under cold water, and set aside to drain. Put the cucumber chunks



Rinsing the raw onion takes away its bite and prevents it from overpowering the soup.

in the food processor; pulse to chop finely. Add the drained onion and pulse to combine. Set aside ¾ cup of the cucumber-onion mix to stir into the soup at the end. Cut the avocado in half and remove the pit. Scoop out the pulp and drop it into the food processor with the remaining cucumber-onion mixture. Add the yogurt, olive oil, garlic, cumin, and salt. Purée until fairly smooth. Using a sharp knife, slice the basil and mint leaves into shreds and then stir them into the soup along with the lemon juice, 1 cup cold water, and the reserved



cucumber-onion mixture. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Cover and chill for several hours. Before serving, check for consistency, gradually adding another ½ to 1 cup cold water to thin the soup if necessary. Add more lemon juice and salt if needed and serve.



Chilled Beet Soup with Horseradish Sour Cream

Yields 4½ cups; serves four.

If you find golden beets at your market, by all means use them here. And don't worry about draining the horseradish; the water in it will help thin the sour cream.

1½ pounds small or medium beets
(about 2 bunches, trimmed),
well scrubbed
4 cloves garlic, unpeeled
3 strips (3 inches long) orange zest
3 sprigs fresh thyme
Kosher salt and freshly ground
white or black pepper
2 tablespoons olive oil
2½ cups homemade or low-salt
canned chicken broth or water
2 teaspoons honey
⅓ cup fresh orange juice
2 tablespoons red-wine vinegar
½ cup sour cream
1 tablespoon prepared horseradish
A few teaspoons cream or water as
needed
Fresh dill sprigs for garnish
(optional)

Heat the oven to 375°F. Put the beets and garlic on a large sheet of heavy-duty aluminum foil. Scatter on the orange zest and thyme, season with salt and pepper, and drizzle with the olive oil. Fold up the sides of the foil and crimp to make a tight packet. Slide the foil packet onto a



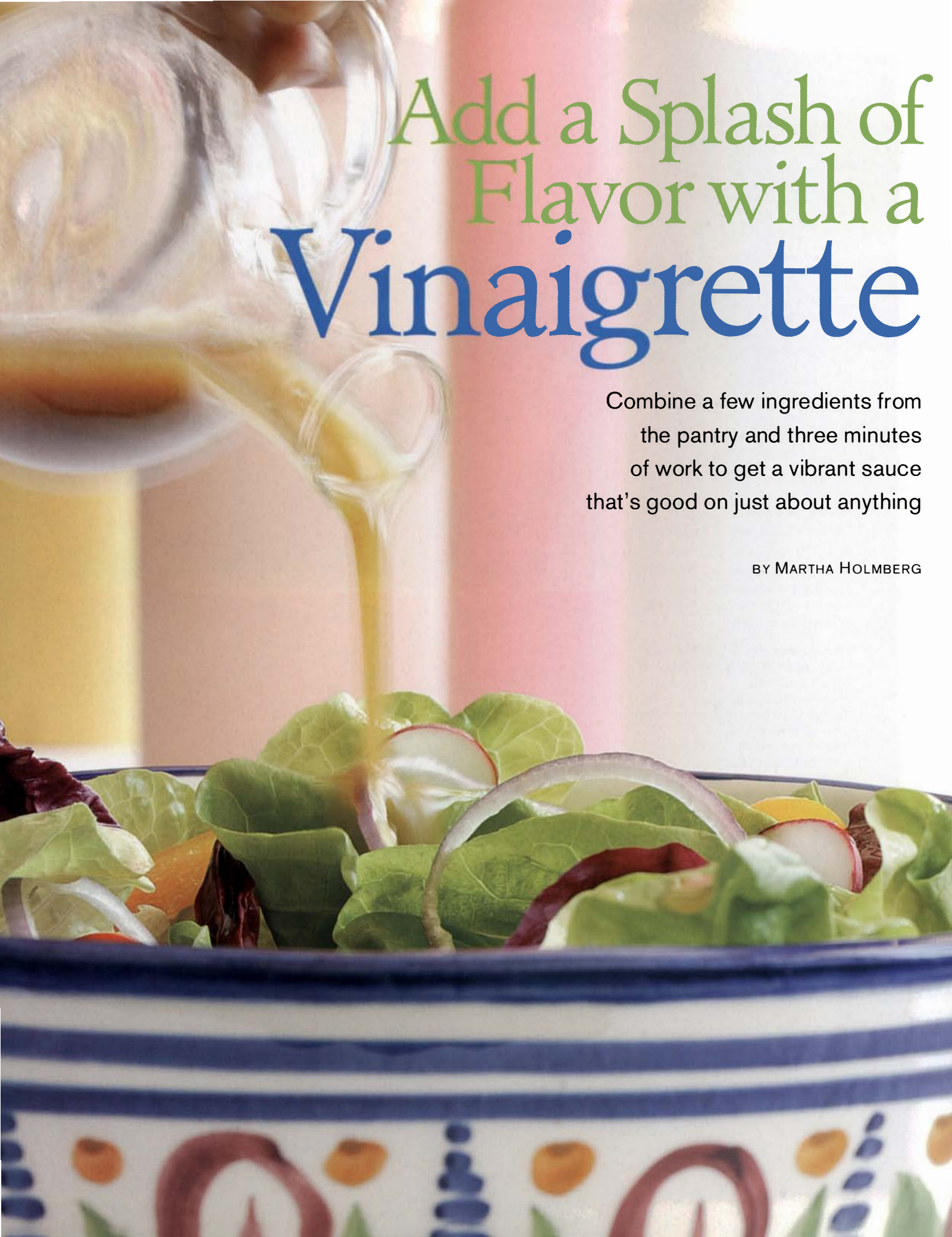
Roast the beets to
deepen their flavor
and intensify
their sweetness.

baking sheet and into the oven. Bake for 1 hour. Open the packet carefully (to avoid the steam) and check that the beets are tender by piercing one with the tip of a sharp knife. The knife should slide in easily; if it doesn't, reseal the package and continue baking. Set aside to cool for 15 to 20 minutes. Using paper towels, rub the skins off the beets and cut the beets into chunks. Peel the garlic cloves. Discard the thyme and orange zest, saving any juices collected in the foil.

Drop about one-third of the beet chunks, the garlic, and any collected juices into a blender. Add

some of the chicken broth and the honey. Before turning on the blender vent the lid by removing the pop-out center if there is one, or just open the lid a bit, and drape a clean dish-towel over the vented lid. Blend to a smooth purée and transfer to a bowl. Continue in batches, puréeing all the beets. Stir in the orange juice and vinegar. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Cover and refrigerate to chill the soup thoroughly. Meanwhile, stir the horseradish into the sour cream. If the sour cream is too stiff (it should be the consistency of lightly whipped cream), stir in a few teaspoons of cream or water to loosen it. Refrigerate until serving time. To serve, ladle the soup into cups or bowls and spoon a bit of the horseradish sour cream onto each serving. Garnish with fresh dill, if you like.

Molly Stevens, a contributing editor to Fine Cooking, is at work on a braising cookbook. ♦

A close-up photograph of a hand pouring a bright yellow vinaigrette from a clear glass pitcher into a bowl of fresh salad. The salad consists of green leafy vegetables, sliced radishes, and other colorful ingredients. The bowl has a decorative blue and white pattern with orange and green accents. The background is softly blurred, showing a pinkish-red surface.

Add a Splash of Flavor with a Vinaigrette

Combine a few ingredients from
the pantry and three minutes
of work to get a vibrant sauce
that's good on just about anything

BY MARTHA HOLMBERG

Making sauces is one of my favorite parts of cooking, and my favorite kind of sauce is a vinaigrette. Making a vinaigrette is so incredibly easy, you almost always have the ingredients on hand, and, once you get the hang of it, you don't need a recipe. You can get creative with fresh herbs, different vinegars and citrus juices, and even different oils. And while most of my vinaigrettes are destined for salads, I use them on all kinds of other dishes as well: grilled fish, seared steak, steamed green beans, boiled potatoes—just about everything but dessert...although I do like a citrus vinaigrette on fruit salad.

The method is as easy as one-to-three

The classic formula for a vinaigrette is one part vinegar to three parts oil. I use this as my starting point and then taste and add a bit more of whatever it takes to make a dressing that's very bright and tangy but not so sharp that it takes your breath away. It's important to remember, however, that you'll be using just a small amount of it and putting it on something fairly mild, so the sauce itself should be very full flavored.

Something to always keep in mind is the freshness of your oil. Oils can go rancid more quickly than you might think, and even a vegetable oil that seems so "shelf-stable" can oxidize over time. Whenever I open a new bottle of any kind of oil, I sample a small spoonful so I have a memory of how it tastes when it's fresh. Then every time I use it, I taste it again to be sure it's still in top condition. If you have open bottles of oil that have been on the shelf for more than a few months, I'd say toss them and start fresh before making your next vinaigrette. (For more on olive oils, see *From Our Test Kitchen*, p. 74.)

The method for making a vinaigrette involves a process called emulsification, which is simply the act of getting oil and water (or vinegar) to mix.

There are a number of ways to do the mixing (see p. 60), but all of them benefit from a "bridge" ingredient that helps emulsify. Both salt and eggs act as emulsifiers, but the handiest—and tastiest—emulsifier for a vinaigrette is mustard.

A small amount of mustard (I use Dijon) binds a vinaigrette and helps it stay that way—creamy and thickened—and the half-teaspoon that I call for in most of my recipes doesn't really add a mustardy flavor. If your sauce does lose its emulsification and separates into layers of oil and vinegar, don't worry about it—just mix it up again right before serving.

(Recipes follow)



*Raspberry-Thyme Vinaigrette
over steamed green beans*



*Mellow Garlic & Basil Vinaigrette
over steamed red potatoes*



*Tomato-Ginger Vinaigrette
over grilled white fish*



Seven vinaigrettes for any occasion

These dressings will last for about a week in the refrigerator.

Classic Sherry Vinaigrette

Yields about 1/2 cup.

2 tablespoons sherry vinegar
1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard
1/4 teaspoon table salt
1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
6 tablespoons good-quality extra-virgin olive oil

In a small bowl, whisk together the vinegar, mustard, salt, and pepper. Slowly whisk in the oil until the dressing is creamy and blended. Taste and adjust the seasonings.

Variations: Substitute an equal amount of red- or white-wine vinegar or use a different oil: walnut, hazelnut, or grapeseed.

Spicy Ginger-Lime-Garlic Vinaigrette

Yields about 1/2 cup.

This tastes best after it sits for about half an hour.

1 teaspoon finely minced fresh ginger
1/2 teaspoon finely grated lime zest
1/2 teaspoon minced garlic
1/4 teaspoon Dijon mustard
1/4 teaspoon table salt
1/8 teaspoon granulated sugar
2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons fresh lime juice
1 teaspoon white-wine vinegar
6 drops hot sauce, like Tabasco; more to taste
1/4 cup grapeseed oil or other neutral-flavored oil

In a small bowl, whisk together the ginger, lime zest, garlic, mustard, salt, sugar, lime juice, vinegar, and hot sauce. Slowly whisk in the oil until the dressing is creamy and blended. Taste and adjust the seasonings.

Raspberry-Thyme Vinaigrette

Yields about 1/2 cup.

2 tablespoons white-wine vinegar
1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar
1/2 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme (or 1/4 teaspoon dried)
1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard
1/4 teaspoon table salt
1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
6 to 8 fresh or thawed frozen raspberries
6 tablespoons good-quality extra-virgin olive oil

In a small bowl, whisk together the white-wine vinegar, balsamic vinegar, thyme, mustard, salt, and pepper. Add the raspberries and crush them to a rough purée with a spoon or your whisk. Slowly whisk in the oil until the dressing is creamy and blended. Taste and adjust the seasonings.

Mellow Garlic & Basil Vinaigrette

Yields about 1/2 cup.

3 small garlic cloves, smashed and peeled
6 tablespoons good-quality extra-virgin olive oil
14 fresh basil leaves
2 tablespoons white-wine vinegar
1 teaspoon packed finely grated lemon zest
1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard
1/4 teaspoon table salt
1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Put the garlic and oil in a small saucepan and heat to medium low, so the cloves are just barely sizzling but not browning. Simmer for 10 minutes, remove from the heat, and add 10 of the basil leaves. Let sit for about another 20 minutes and then remove the garlic and basil leaves.

In a small bowl, whisk together the vinegar, lemon zest, mustard, salt, and pepper. Slowly whisk in the flavored oil until the dressing is creamy and blended. Roll the remaining basil leaves into a tight roll and slice across to make thin shreds. Stir into the dressing. Taste and adjust the seasonings.

Mustard Vinaigrette

Yields about 1/2 cup.

2 teaspoons whole-grain Dijon mustard
1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard
1/2 teaspoon honey
1/4 teaspoon table salt
1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
3 drops hot sauce, like Tabasco
2 tablespoons white-wine vinegar
6 tablespoons good-quality extra-virgin olive oil

In a small bowl, whisk together the grainy mustard, Dijon mustard, honey, salt, pepper, hot sauce, and vinegar. Slowly whisk in the oil until the dressing is creamy and blended. Taste and adjust the seasonings.

Mixing it up

Use whatever tool is most comfortable for you. I used to reach for my whisk, but ever since my sister gave me an Aerolatte (below) for my morning coffee, I've been using it for vinaigrettes—it's fun and fast. Blenders are good for large quantities; food processors can work in a pinch. For sources for these tools, see p. 76. Simply shaking the ingredients in a jar with a tight-fitting lid will also produce beautifully blended vinaigrettes.



Caesar-Style Vinaigrette

Yields about 1/2 cup.

This dressing works best in a food processor or blender.

1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano
1 teaspoon packed finely grated lemon zest
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
2 to 3 medium anchovy fillets
1 to 2 medium cloves garlic
1/4 teaspoon table salt
1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
6 tablespoons good-quality extra-virgin olive oil

Put the cheese, lemon zest, mustard, anchovies, garlic, salt, pepper, and lemon juice in a food processor and process until well blended. With the motor running, slowly pour in the olive oil and process until creamy and blended. Taste and adjust the seasonings.

Tomato-Ginger Vinaigrette

Yields about 1/2 cup.

1 tablespoon minced oil-packed or other soft sun-dried tomato
1 teaspoon finely minced fresh ginger
1 teaspoon packed finely grated orange zest
1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard
1/2 teaspoon tomato paste
1/4 teaspoon table salt
1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
2 tablespoons cider vinegar
1 tablespoon fresh orange juice
6 tablespoons good-quality extra-virgin olive oil

In a small bowl, whisk together the sun-dried tomato, ginger, orange zest, mustard, tomato paste, salt, pepper, vinegar, and orange juice. Slowly whisk in the oil until the dressing is creamy and blended. Taste and adjust the seasonings.

Martha Holmberg is the publisher and editor in chief of Fine Cooking. ♦

Spice Up Your Favorite Peach Desserts

BY ABIGAIL JOHNSON DODGE



Peach cobbler,
cake, galette,
and sundaes
all get a boost
from unexpected
flavor pairings

Hand me a bowl of ripe peaches and point me toward the spice cabinet, and in an hour or two, I'll bake you a terrific peach dessert—something that feels traditional but has a hint of the unexpected about it. I do this by adding certain spices (as well as nuts or other ingredients) to old-fashioned peach desserts like cobblers and cakes. This little trick has given new life to my old repertoire of peach desserts.

The desserts on these pages are a few examples of this flavor-pairing technique. I've given my favorite little peach cake the warmth of a vanilla bean, and my peach cobbler becomes ever so slightly more sophisticated with a subtle, spicy note of freshly ground star anise. Peach galette gets a zingy lift with fresh ginger. And with a nod to the classic peach melba, I've created a peach phyllo sundae with notes of honey, pistachio, and lime.

Here are a few more ideas worth trying on your own: Add a good pinch of freshly ground black pepper to biscuits for peach shortcakes; try maple syrup in a peach smoothie; drizzle a dark rum glaze over homemade peach ice cream; or

layer toasted chopped pecans in a parfait made with fresh peaches and sweetened mascarpone. See the sidebar on p. 65 for a list of other ingredients that complement peach desserts.

Don't forget that peaches marry well with other fruits in season at the same time. Other stone fruits like plums, apricots, and nectarines are wonderful partners in peach cobblers or galettes. Dried fruits like tart cherries or dried apricots also make a nice accent to a peach pie or compote. And of course peaches and berries are a fool-proof combination.

Keep the peach as the star. There's just one caveat when you use this approach, and that's to be discreet with your complementary flavorings. The goal is to enhance the fruit's flavor, not overwhelm it.

And it should go without saying that you should always start with the sweetest, ripest, juiciest peaches you can find. No amount of flavor doctoring can compensate for inferior peaches. You'll notice that I don't bother peeling the peaches in the recipes here. That's because those paper-thin skins never bother me, especially as they soften with cooking, and I love the blush of color they contribute to desserts.



Peach Cake with Apricot & Vanilla Glaze

Serves eight.

The cake is best served the day it's baked.

6¾ ounces (1½ cups) all-purpose flour
1½ teaspoons baking powder
½ teaspoon table salt
¼ pound (½ cup) unsalted butter, at room temperature
1 cup plus 2 teaspoons granulated sugar
½ vanilla bean or 1¼ teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2 large eggs, at room temperature
⅔ cup whole milk
2 firm but ripe peaches (about 5 ounces each), pitted and sliced about ⅛ inch thick
¼ cup apricot jelly
2 teaspoons brandy

Position an oven rack in the middle of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Generously butter and flour a 10x2-inch fluted quiche pan (measured across the top; for sources, see p. 76) or a 9x2-inch round cake pan.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, and salt; set aside. In a large bowl, beat the butter with an electric mixer until smooth. Add 1 cup of the sugar. Split the vanilla bean (if using) with a paring knife and scrape out the seeds. Add them to the bowl; reserve the pod. Beat on medium speed, scraping down the sides, until the mixture is well combined and has some body, about 3 minutes. If using vanilla extract, beat in 1 teaspoon now. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Add half of the flour mixture and mix on low speed until just blended. Add the milk and mix until just blended. Add the remaining flour mixture and mix until just blended.

Pour the batter into the prepared pan and spread evenly. Arrange the peach slices, overlapping slightly, on top of the batter in a circular pattern (you

might not need all the slices) and sprinkle with the remaining 2 teaspoons sugar. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the center of the cake comes out clean, 50 to 55 minutes.

While the cake bakes, make the glaze. Put the apricot jelly, brandy, and the empty vanilla bean pod (if using) in a small saucepan and heat on medium low until syrupy. Remove from the heat, cover, and let the vanilla bean infuse for 20 minutes. Remove the bean. If using vanilla extract, stir in ¼ teaspoon now.

When the cake is done, let it cool on a wire rack for 20 minutes. Run a small knife around the inside edge of the pan to loosen the cake. Remove the cake from the pan; transfer it to a serving plate. Just before serving, reheat the glaze to liquefy it and brush it over the peaches.

Five more things to do with peaches

❖ Simmer peach halves in a light, fruity red wine with a bit of sugar and ground cloves until tender. Serve chilled on their own or with crisp lemon cookies.

❖ Dice peaches and use them as the lead ingredient in a fruit salsa—and don't forget the jalapeños. Grilled fish or chicken will pair beautifully with the sweetness and the heat.

❖ Sauté peach chunks in butter, brown sugar, and a dash of cinnamon until the edges are browned. Spoon over buttermilk waffles or oatmeal.

❖ Purée unpeeled peaches with superfine sugar, grated lemon zest, and a dash of lemon-flavored liqueur. Serve the purée ice cold in small soup bowls and garnish with a few diced peaches and thinly sliced mint leaves.

❖ Scoop out some of the flesh from halved, pitted peaches, leaving about ½ inch of a shell. Freeze the shells and use the flesh to make a sorbet. Spoon the sorbet back into each shell and freeze. Serve with a light, sweet sparkling wine like Moscato.

Peach-Ginger Galette with Hazelnuts

Serves eight.

Serve this the day it's baked.

FOR THE GALETTE DOUGH:

9 ounces (2 cups) all-purpose flour
3 tablespoons granulated sugar
1 teaspoon ground ginger
½ teaspoon table salt
5½ ounces (11 tablespoons) very cold unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch pieces
½ cup very cold water

FOR THE HAZELNUT TOPPING:

½ cup (1½ ounces) very coarsely chopped hazelnuts (with or without the skin)
1 tablespoon light brown sugar
1 teaspoon all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted

FOR THE PEACH FILLING:

3 tablespoons cornstarch
½ cup packed light brown sugar
¼ teaspoon table salt
2¼ pounds firm but ripe peaches (4 to 5 peaches), pitted and cut into ¾-inch wedges
2 teaspoons minced fresh ginger
2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
2 tablespoons cream or milk

Vanilla ice cream or sweetened whipped cream for serving (optional)

Make the galette dough: Combine the flour, sugar, ground ginger, and salt in a food processor and pulse to combine. Scatter the chilled butter pieces around the bowl and pulse in 1-second bursts just until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Drizzle the water evenly over the crumbs and process just until the dough is moist but still extremely crumbly, about 5 seconds. Turn the dough onto a work surface and press it into a 6-inch disk. Wrap the disk in plastic and refrigerate until well chilled, at least 1 hour.

Make the topping: In a small bowl, combine the chopped hazelnuts, brown sugar, and flour with a fork until blended. Drizzle the melted butter evenly over the mixture and toss with the fork until combined.

Fill and bake the galette: Position an oven rack in the middle of the oven; heat the oven to 425°F. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment. Unwrap the galette dough and set it on a lightly floured work surface. Roll out the dough, turning and lightly flour-

ing it and the work surface as necessary, into a round that's ⅛ to ¼ inch thick and about 15 inches in diameter. Trim the excess dough to make a 14-inch round. Loosely roll the dough around the rolling pin and transfer it to the lined baking sheet. The dough will hang over the edges of the pan. Cover and refrigerate the dough.

Meanwhile, make the filling. In a large bowl, whisk together the cornstarch, brown sugar, and salt until no lumps remain. Add the peach slices, minced ginger, and lemon juice. Toss until the peaches are well combined with the dry ingredients.

Remove the dough from the fridge. If it isn't pliable, let it warm up at room temperature for a few minutes. Give the peach filling a toss and pile it in the center of the dough, leaving a 3-inch rim bare. Fold this border over the filling, pleating the dough as you go. Gently press the pleats to seal. Tuck in any peach slices that stick out. Brush the pleated border with the cream or milk and sprinkle the hazelnut topping on the dough border, pressing on the nuts so they stick.

Put the galette in the oven and immediately reduce the heat to 400°F. Bake until the crust is browned on the top and bottom, 45 to 50 minutes. Check the galette after about 30 minutes; if the nuts are darkening too much, cover very loosely with foil.

Serve warm or at room temperature with a scoop of vanilla ice cream or a dollop of lightly sweetened whipped cream, if you like.





Pistachio Peach Sundaes in Crisp Phyllo Cups

Yields six sundaes.

You can bake the phyllo cups one day ahead and store them in an airtight container.

FOR THE SHELLS:

1½ ounces (3 tablespoons) unsalted butter
1 tablespoon honey (I like lavender honey)
Pinch table salt
¾ ounce (3 tablespoons) very finely chopped pistachios
1 package (1 pound) phyllo dough, thawed overnight in the fridge in its wrapping (you'll only use 6 or 7 sheets)

FOR THE COMPOTE:

3 tablespoons honey
¾ teaspoon finely grated lime zest (from 1 medium lime if using a Microplane grater)
1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
Pinch table salt
3 firm but ripe peaches, halved and pitted
1 cup fresh raspberries or blueberries

FOR SERVING:

Vanilla ice cream
⅓ cup (1½ ounces) coarsely chopped pistachios

Make the phyllo cups: Position an oven rack in the middle of the oven; heat the oven to 325°F. Lightly butter six large (10-ounce) Pyrex custard cups, ramekins, or muffin tins.

Combine the butter, honey, and salt in a small saucepan. Cook over medium heat, stirring often, until the butter is melted and the mixture is combined, about 2 minutes.

Clear two large work surfaces (one for the phyllo and another for assembly) and set out a long ruler, a sharp knife or pizza wheel, a pastry brush, and a damp towel. Have the butter mixture and the pistachios ready.

Unwrap the phyllo package and peel off six or seven sheets, laying them flat. (Wrap up the remaining dough, refrigerate it, and save for another use.) Carefully lift up one sheet and lay it flat on the other surface; cover the rest of the dough with the damp towel so it doesn't dry out. It's all right if the dough tears slightly, but if it sticks to itself or rips severely, toss it out and use the next sheet. Brush the entire sheet with some

of the honey mixture. Sprinkle evenly with 1 tablespoon of the pistachios. Lay a second sheet of dough directly on top of the first and press gently. Brush the sheet with more of the honey mixture. Sprinkle another tablespoon of pistachios evenly over the phyllo. Cover with a third sheet of phyllo and press gently. Brush again with the honey mixture and sprinkle with the remaining pistachios. Top with a fourth and final layer of phyllo and press gently.

Using the knife or pizza wheel (use the ruler for a straight edge), trim the phyllo stack into a 16½x11-inch rectangle. Cut it lengthwise into two 5½-inch-wide strips. Cut the strips crosswise into thirds, so you get six 5½-inch squares.

Set the six custard cups on a baking sheet. Gently ease a phyllo square into a cup so the bottom fits snugly and the sides form a cup shape. The sides will be a bit ruffy; don't worry about making them flush. Repeat with the rest of the phyllo. Bake until the bottom of the phyllo cups are golden all



Work gently when you ease the delicate phyllo into baking cups. It's fine if they're a bit ruffy.



Bake the phyllo cups just until golden. The tips will be paler than the rest of the cup.

over (the tips will be paler), 14 to 18 minutes. Let cool completely in the custard cups.

Make the compote: In a small saucepan, combine the honey, lime zest, lime juice, and salt. Cook over medium heat, stirring frequently, until well combined and smooth, about 1 minute. Set aside to cool slightly.

Cut each peach half into thin (¼- to ½-inch) wedges and then cut crosswise into halves or thirds. Put the peaches and berries in a large bowl. Drizzle the warm honey mixture over the fruit, scraping the pan with a rubber spatula, and gently toss. Use immediately or cover and refrigerate for up to 6 hours.

Assemble the sundaes: Put the ice cream in the fridge to soften slightly, about 10 minutes. Set the phyllo cups on dessert plates. Stir the compote and spoon some fruit into each shell. Add a scoop of ice cream, spoon on some juices from the compote, and sprinkle with the chopped pistachios. Serve immediately.

Peachy flavor pairings

Consider the ingredients on this list as a starting point for your own peach combinations. Remember to use stronger spices and flavors more judiciously so as not to overwhelm the flavor of the peaches.

- ❖ brown sugar
- ❖ buttermilk
- ❖ cinnamon
- ❖ Champagne
- ❖ citrus (orange, lemon, or lime) juice or zest
- ❖ cloves
- ❖ dried apricots
- ❖ dried cherries
- ❖ fruity red wine
- ❖ ginger, both fresh and ground
- ❖ maple syrup
- ❖ nutmeg
- ❖ nuts like pistachios, walnuts, hazelnuts, pecans, and almonds
- ❖ star anise
- ❖ toasted coconut flakes
- ❖ vanilla (extract or bean)



Peach Cobbler with Star Anise

Serves eight.

Star anise is usually sold in the supermarket spice section. To grind it, put the whole spice in a spice or coffee grinder. I find that $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon isn't detectable and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon is overpowering, thus the "scant $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon."

FOR THE PEACH FILLING:
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup packed light brown sugar
 1 tablespoon cornstarch
 Scant $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon freshly ground star anise
 Pinch table salt
 3 pounds firm but ripe peaches (about 6 large), pitted
 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE COBBLER TOPPING:
 $4\frac{1}{2}$ ounces (1 cup) all-purpose flour
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup fine cornmeal
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup packed light brown sugar
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons baking powder
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon table salt
 Pinch freshly ground star anise
 2 ounces ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup) cold unsalted butter, cut into $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch pieces
 6 tablespoons heavy cream

Lightly sweetened whipped cream for garnish (optional)

Position an oven rack in the middle of the oven; heat the oven to 375°F. Lightly butter a 10-cup baking dish (10x2-inch round or 9-inch square).

Make the filling: In a large bowl, mix the brown sugar, cornstarch, ground star anise, and salt until combined; break up any lumps.

Cut the peaches into 1-inch-wide wedges and cut each wedge in half crosswise. Add the peaches and vanilla to the dry ingredients and toss to coat the peaches evenly. Pour the fruit and its juices into the buttered baking dish, scraping the bowl of any sugar. Spread the fruit evenly.

Make the topping: In a food processor, combine the flour, cornmeal, brown sugar, baking powder, salt, and the pinch of ground star anise. Pulse briefly

to blend. Add the cold butter pieces and pulse until they're the size of small peas. Pour the cream over the dough and pulse just until moist crumbs form. Dump the dough onto a lightly floured work surface. Gather the dough and press it to form a square that's 1 inch thick. Lightly flour the dough. Roll it out, flouring as needed, to a $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-thick rectangle; it should measure about 5x9 inches. Cut the rectangle in half lengthwise, and cut each half into four pieces, each about $2\frac{1}{2}$ x2 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

Arrange the dough squares on top of the peaches, leaving spaces between each one. Bake until the filling is bubbling and the topping is nicely browned, about 40 minutes. The cobbler is best when served warm on the same day it's baked, preferably with a little lightly sweetened whipped cream on the side.

Abigail Johnson Dodge, a contributing editor to Fine Cooking, is a baker and the author of The Kid's Baking Book, due out this fall. She's working on her next book, The Weekend Baker. ♦

BY JENNIFER ARMENTROUT

Most of us at *Fine Cooking* get excited about a great food market in the same way that kids get excited about Christmas. On a recent trip to Montreal to attend a culinary convention, we skipped the tourist venues in favor of the city's Atwater Market, where we spent the afternoon drooling over perfect produce and pristine meats, all the while lamenting the fact that we have nothing like it near our Connecticut offices. But while it's true that a trip to a great market is a cook's muse, our lack of cosmopolitan choices keeps us honest when it comes to testing recipes. Like most of you, we shop at local supermarkets, so we know when an ingredient is hard to come by, and we make a special effort to find a more readily available alternative or a mail-order source. So while we might continue to wish for a fabulous market, at least we can take some satisfaction in knowing that *Fine Cooking's* recipes remain accessible to everyone.

A trip to a great market is a cook's muse.

Cold foods need extra seasoning

Did you know that temperature affects our ability to taste? Maybe you've noticed while eating ice cream that as it melts in your mouth, it becomes more flavorful. That's because maximum human taste sensitivity lies in the range of 72° to 105°F, according to some studies. This doesn't tend to matter much when we cook foods that will be served hot because they're usually at their serving temperature when we season them. Foods that are to be served cold, however, are usually hot or at room temperature when we season them. Keep this in mind the next time you're making something like a cold soup or a potato salad. Go ahead and give it that extra pinch of salt up front, and then don't forget to taste and adjust the seasonings once the dish is chilled.

at the market

A galaxy of tomatoes

There's an amazing variety of tomatoes at the market these days, ranging in size from tiny currant tomatoes to giant beefsteaks and in colors from green to brownish purple. But not all are multi-purpose. Here are some of the types of tomato you might find at your farmers' market or grocery store.

—Joanne Weir, contributor



PLUM: Also called a Roma or Italian tomato, this egg-shaped meaty tomato can be red or yellow. It's good for cooking and canning because its water content is relatively low, and it yields lots of thick sauce.



CHERRY: Red, orange, yellow, or green, this round bite-size tomato is about an inch or less in diameter. Red and yellow varieties have a more pronounced flavor. Use for salads, garnishes, quick sautés, and eating out of hand.



PEAR: Also called "teardrop," this bite-size tomato has a shape that mirrors its two names. It can be yellow, red, or orange. It's slightly smaller and much milder than a cherry tomato, but its uses are the same.

A neater approach to roasted garlic

There's more than one way to roast garlic. For a long time, I roasted whole heads of garlic with their tops cut off so I could just squeeze the cloves of roasted garlic right out of their skins. That approach was all right, but the garlic got squished, my fingers got sticky, and annoying flakes of papery skin would stick to my fingers and get in my roasted garlic. Now I use this neater method.

1. Separate a head of garlic into individual cloves. Don't peel the cloves, but do rub off any flaky or papery skin. Use a paring knife to nip off the stem end of each clove. You want the peel to stay on, but it's fine if a little comes off.

2. Put the cloves in the center of a square of aluminum foil, drizzle with a little olive oil, and use your fingers to rub the oil evenly on the cloves. Add fresh herb sprigs for aroma, if you like.

3. Gather the foil into a beggar's pouch and set the pouch directly on the rack of a 350°F oven. Roast until the garlic becomes very soft and lightly browned, about 1 hour. You can roast two heads' worth of cloves in one pouch, but for more than that, make another pouch.

4. Open the pouch and let the cloves sit until they're cool enough to handle. Squeeze each clove gently at the untrimmed end and the roasted flesh should slide right out in one piece.



GRAPE: Another bite-size tomato, this one is sweet and shaped like an elongated sphere (just like a grape). It's usually red or yellow and less than an inch in diameter. Use like cherry and pear tomatoes.



SLICER OR GLOBE: Ranging from golfball to baseball size, this generally juicy, flavorful tomato comes in all colors. A good tomato for slicing and for salads.



BEEFSTEAK: This jumbo juicy tomato has an irregular pumpkin-like shape and comes in all colors. It's good cooked or raw (it has an intense tomatoey flavor) and, though messy, great for thick slices.



GREEN: There are two kinds—tomatoes that remain green when fully ripe, such as the tangy Zebras shown here; and red tomatoes picked before they ripen, which are quite tart and best used for frying, for broiling, and in relishes.



HEIRLOOM: This name refers to any time-honored tomato variety grown from open-pollinated seeds. They may be sensitive to weather and disease, but their flavor can be exceptional.

A better chicken comes to town

One of the supermarket chains near our Connecticut offices recently started selling a new brand of chicken called “Smart Chicken.” According to MBA Poultry, the company that produces Smart Chicken, the big difference between its product and every other kind of chicken available in the United States is the way its chickens are chilled after slaughter. Other U.S. processors use an ice-water bath; Smart Chicken uses purified chilled air instead, as European processors do. The advantages to this are that the chickens don’t come in contact with one another as they do in a communal water bath (eliminating the possibility of bacterial cross-contamination), and their natural juices aren’t washed away and replaced with water, so they taste more like chicken should. The chickens are raised naturally on

vegetarian feed, and they don’t receive antibiotics.

Ever the skeptics, we bought some Smart Chicken breasts and pitted them against three other national brands, two of which were “natural,” in an impromptu, unscientific blind tasting. While Smart Chicken didn’t win by a landslide, its firm, juicy texture and full, chickeny flavor made it the favorite of the major-

ity. It has since become my favorite brand, not only because of its flavor, but also because I think it’s butchered better than the other brands available in my area, so I don’t have to do as much trimming of unwanted fat and skin.

Where to find it. Smart Chicken is available in nineteen states. Check out the grocery-store finder at www.smartchicken.com to see if it’s carried in a store near you. If not, you can order it through the Web site.

Smart Chicken uses purified chilled air to cool its chicken

Make your own gas grill smoker pouch



A little extra smoke adds great flavor to grilled food. Smoking is easy on a charcoal grill—simply toss water-soaked wood chips on the coals—but on a gas grill, you can’t toss in chips directly because they could clog the gas pipe. You can buy a metal smoker box (some high-end gas grills come with one), but it’s easy to achieve the same effect with a homemade smoker pouch. Simply wrap a large handful of soaked wood chips in heavy-duty aluminum foil to make a pillow-shaped package. Poke holes on top to release smoke and set the pouch under the grill grate. Run your grill on high until you see smoke.

—Steven Raichlen, contributor

How hot is the grill fire?

Say you’re following a grilling recipe that instructs you to build a very hot charcoal fire. “Okay, fine,” you say, “but how do I know when the fire is very hot?” Believe it or not, you use your hand.

To test the heat level of your fire, hold your open palm an inch or two above the grill grate. The length of time you can stand the heat tells you how hot the grill is. (For best results, the grilling grate should be about 4 inches above the coals.) This test works for gas grills as well.

Time hand can be held over grill Grill heat Temperature

Less than 1 second

Very hot

Over 600°F

1 to 2 seconds

Hot

400° to 500°F

3 to 4 seconds

Medium

350° to 375°F

5 to 7 seconds

Medium low

325° to 350°F

You can also tell something about the heat of a charcoal fire by looking at it. Bright-red flaming coals are extremely hot—too hot for most grilling. Red coals covered with light ash are still fairly hot but suitable for high heat grilling. Coals thickly covered with yellowish ash are medium hot.

—Susie Middleton, executive editor



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ingredient

Spearmint

It seems like mint is everywhere at this time of year. If you don't have some growing in your yard, chances are you know someone who does because once it's planted in an uncontained area, it's practically impossible to get rid of it. Fortunately for us, it also happens to be pretty tasty.

Mint comes in several varieties—such as peppermint, pineapple mint, and chocolate mint—but spearmint is the quintessential culinary mint. When you see “mint” at the supermarket, it's usually spearmint. It has a powerful, cooling, slightly sweet flavor that's great in both sweet and savory foods. Get to know spearmint better by trying one of the recipes below, or check out our recipe index on p. 6 for the other mint-accented recipes in this issue.

How to store: If you don't have mint growing nearby and can't pick it as you need it, store your mint like a bouquet of flowers, with the cut ends in a cup of water. Cover loosely with a plastic bag and refrigerate.

Spearmint Syrup

Yields about 1 1/3 cups.

This multipurpose syrup is a great way to capture the essence of mint. Drizzle the syrup over a fresh fruit salad, use it to flavor hot or cold green tea, or add it to a fruit smoothie.

1 small (¾-ounce) bunch fresh spearmint
1 cup granulated sugar

Rinse the mint well and drain. Put the sugar in a small saucepan and toss the mint on top. Crush the mint into the sugar with a wooden spoon to release its flavor. Add 1 cup water. Bring to simmer over medium heat, stirring frequently until the sugar is dissolved. As soon as the syrup starts simmering rapidly, remove it from the heat and set aside to infuse for 20 minutes. Strain, discarding the mint, and let cool to room temperature. Store in the refrigerator for up to two weeks.



Mojito

Serves one; recipe doubles or quadruples easily.

A hot summer day calls for a cool drink like this refreshing Cuban mint and lime cocktail (it's pronounced moh-HEE-toh). If your barware is particularly fragile, muddle the mint and sugar together in a mortar or other vessel and then transfer it to the serving glass.

6 large fresh spearmint leaves, plus 1 nice sprig for garnish
4 teaspoons superfine sugar; more to taste
1 lime
Crushed ice as needed
2 fluid ounces (¼ cup) light rum
Cold club soda as needed

In a tall, narrow (Collins) glass, mash the mint leaves into the sugar with a muddler or a similar tool (like the handle of a wooden spoon) until the leaves look crushed and the sugar starts to turn light green, about 30 seconds. Cut the lime into quarters. Squeeze the juice from all four quarters into the glass, dropping two of the squeezed quarters into the glass as you go. Stir with a teaspoon until the sugar dissolves into the lime juice. Fill the glass with

crushed ice and pour the rum over the ice. Top off with club soda, stir well, garnish with the mint sprig, and serve right away.

tip You can make your own superfine sugar by grinding regular granulated sugar in a blender.



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READER SERVICE NO. 34

Tips for buying and cleaning squid

Some fish markets sell squid that's already been cleaned, but you'll pay extra for it. If you want to save a little money, you can buy whole squid and clean them yourself.

Fresh squid should have a clean ocean scent, and it should look shiny and plump, not deflated. The body, or "hood," of a whole squid is covered with a purplish-gray membrane that's edible but is sometimes removed for looks. Avoid frozen squid if it shows signs of freezer burn, such as excess ice crystals.



With a sharp chef's knife, cut off the tentacles below the eyes. Flip the tentacles back and squeeze out and discard the beak. Trim off the "wings" on the sides of the body.

Starting at the tip of the body, run the dull edge of the knife firmly down the squid to simultaneously peel off much of the membrane and squeeze out the viscera, including the plastic-like skeleton or "quill."

Rinse the cleaned tentacles and bodies, inside and out, under running water. Cut large tentacles in half. The bodies can be cut crosswise to make rings, sliced lengthwise into strips, or left whole for stuffing.

Making mayonnaise at home

We tested two versions of the Roasted Chicken Salad with Fennel & Black Olives on p. 51, one made with store-bought mayonnaise and the other with homemade.

The store-bought version was fine, but we greatly preferred the homemade version. Mayonnaise made entirely with extra-virgin olive oil is strongly flavored, but it holds up to the bold flavors in the chicken salad. If you're making this mayonnaise to go with other, less flavorful foods, use regular olive oil, a neutral vegetable oil, or a combination.

Mayonnaise

Yields about 1 cup.

1 egg yolk, at room temperature
1 cup extra-virgin olive oil, olive oil, or vegetable oil
Juice from ½ lemon
Kosher salt

In a mixing bowl or in a blender or food processor, combine the egg yolk and ½ tablespoon water. Whisk vigorously or blend until pale and slightly thickened. While whisking constantly or with the machine running, add a drop of the oil. Add another drop, keep whisking or blending, and then begin to stream in the oil, very slowly. Once the emulsion takes hold, you can gradually increase the speed at which you add the oil. Keep whisking or blending constantly. If the mayonnaise gets too thick, whisk in a little water. When all of the oil has been added, blend in the lemon juice and season with salt to taste.



favorite gadget

The tomato shark

Whenever I'm working with tomatoes, the first thing I reach for is my tomato coring tool, which is also known as a tomato shark. One look at this gadget and you can see why. It's like a tiny spoon wearing a crown of shark-like teeth, and it can scoop the core out of a tomato far more quickly and neatly than the tip of a knife. It also hulls strawberries. Tomato sharks are available at many stores that carry kitchenwares; for a mail-order source, see *Where to Buy It*, p. 76.



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tasting panel

Extra-Virgin Olive Oil

These days, grocery stores are carrying a dizzying variety of extra-virgin olive oils. One store near us carries nineteen brands. But after holding a blind tasting of sixteen nationally available extra-virgin oils, we no longer have to waffle over which ones to buy. For the most part, none of the olive oils we tasted blew us away. Of the sixteen, however, two stood out as a cut above—good enough to use as a garnish over slices of fresh tomato or for dipping a crusty wedge of bread into. Three others were highly regarded—considered solid choices for cooking and for salad dressings. The top two were relatively on par with one another, so they're listed alphabetically. The second tier oils are listed in order of preference although two, Dal Raccolto and Carapelli, were a dead tie. The other oils in the tasting included Badia a Coltibuono, Bertolli, DaVinci, Filippo Berio, President's Reserve, Rao's, Spectrum Organic, Star, Tassos, 365 Organic, and Trader Joe's. The oils were judged for their aroma, flavor, and overall likability. Color wasn't considered in the judging because, while it has aesthetic merit, it doesn't affect flavor.

—Maryellen Driscoll, editor at large

RUNNERS UP

Listed in order of preference.



COLAVITA

\$6.49 for 17 fluid ounces
(38 cents per fluid ounce)

This oil had a distinct albeit subtle combination of flavors, including almond, herbs, fruit, and grass, and a building pepper finish. As one taster wrapped it up, "Clean, mild, and relatively balanced." Available in supermarkets nationwide.



CARAPELLI

\$5.79 for 17 fluid ounces
(34 cents per fluid ounce)

Mild and smooth, this oil seemed as if it "would blend well with other flavors" but was "not distinctive enough to lend true 'olive oil-ness' to a dish." It contained flavor elements of grass and butter with a hit of pepper late in the aftertaste. Available in supermarkets nationwide.



DAL RACCOLTO

\$6.99 for 16.9 fluid ounces
(41 cents per fluid ounce)

This oil carried a fresh, bright, garden-like aroma. The flavor was described as "pure" and rounded although not especially complex. A late-blooming but perky peppery finish won over many tasters. Available in supermarkets nationwide.

top picks

Listed alphabetically



LUCINI

\$11.99 for 17 fluid ounces
(71 cents per fluid ounce)

Both fruity and grassy, this oil had hints of chive, melon, and banana. Vibrant, pleasant, and balanced overall, the oil had just a subtle peppery finish and a moderate overall assertiveness of flavor. Available in supermarkets nationwide.



UNIO

\$10.99 for 25.4 fluid ounces
(43 cents per fluid ounce)

This oil was popular for its grassy character, which one taster described as reminiscent of "nuzzling your face into a lawn full of warm clover." It was described as round, balanced and "impressive," with mild bitterness and "a fine touch of pepper" to its finish. Available in Whole Foods stores and some supermarkets.

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FROM THE BACK COVER

For more information about the **Eastern Native Seed Conservancy** and heirloom tomatoes, attend the annual Tomato Fête on September 7 in Lenox, Massachusetts. Call 413-229-8316 or visit www.enscseeds.org for an online catalog.

World Cuisines *p. 28*

To buy Greek olive oil, look up **Cardullo's Gourmet Shoppe** (www.cardullos.com; 800-491-8288). This specialty store, based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, sells a 17-ounce bottle of Gaea Kalamata extra-virgin for \$7.99, an 8½-ounce bottle of Morea extra-virgin for \$13.99, and an 8½-ounce bottle of Kalamata Gold extra-virgin for \$15.99. The Greek yogurt Total (also labeled as Fage) is available at most **Whole Foods** markets and at many natural-foods stores.

Grilled Chicken Breasts *p. 32*

A meat pounder is a great tool for pounding meats flat to help them cook evenly and make them tender. To find one for making

Steven Raichlen's grilled chicken paillards, go to **Dorothy McNett's Place** (831-637-6444; www.happycookers.com), where a Mouli stainless-steel pounder is \$26.99.



Vinaigrettes *p. 58*

There are a couple of tools on the market that are especially helpful with making vinaigrettes. **Tabletools.com** (888-211-6603) carries the Caffè Froth Turbo Deluxe for \$19.95, a sort of mini immersion blender, which in addition to doing a wonderful job foaming up coffee, also emulsifies vinaigrettes. Tabletools.com also carries the Aerolatte Milk Frother for \$19.95 which similarly whips together vinaigrettes. The Bon Jour Salad Chef, available for \$19.99 at **Kitchenkapers.com** (856-424-3400) is the next level in vinaigrette gadgetry, with a carafe to hold both the vinaigrette and the tiny blender.



Grilled Shrimp *p. 42*

If shrimp aren't local to your waters, Elizabeth Karmel recommends buying them frozen in blocks for the best flavor. Try **AlwaysFreshFish.com** (732-349-0518). Old Bay seasoning is sold in most grocery stores and can be ordered from **Maryland Delivered.com** (888-284-8565). A 6-ounce tin is \$4.95. Elizabeth also recommends fleur de sel as an option for sprinkling on the grilled shrimp margaritas. Fleur de

sel is also a nice finish for grilled steaks, roasted chicken, and grilled vegetables. **Dean & DeLuca** (877-826-9246; www.deandeluca.com), sells two 8.8-ounce bags of fleur de sel de Guernsey for \$25.



Peach Desserts *p. 61*

An 10x2-inch fluted cake pan for making Abby Dodge's peach cake is available at **A Cook's Wares** (800-915-9788; www.cookswares.com) for \$13. If you can't find star anise in the spice section of your grocer, order it from **Adriana's Caravan** (www.adrianascaravan.com; 800-316-0820), where the aromatic star-shaped spice is about \$3 per ounce.

From Our Test Kitchen *p. 66*

For a tomato shark, check local kitchenwares stores or **Sur La Table**

(www.surlatable.com; 800-243-0852), which carries one for \$5.95.

Quick & Delicious *p. 82C*

Vanilla bean paste combines the intense flavor of vanilla beans with the convenience of vanilla extract. **The Baker's Catalogue** (www.kingarthurflour.com; 800-827-6836) carries a 4-ounce jar for \$12.50.



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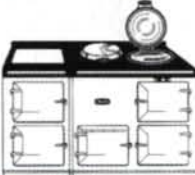
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nutritioninformation

Recipe (analysis per serving)	Calories		Protein (g)	Carb (g)	Fats (g)				Chol (mg)	Sodium (mg)	Fiber (g)	Notes
	total	from fat			total	sat	mono	poly				
In Season, p. 16												
Oven-Roasted Eggplant	220	130	4	23	14	2	10	1	0	970	9	based on 2 servings per tablespoon
Eggplant Caviar	20	10	0	2	1.5	0	1	0	0	90	1	
World Cuisines, p. 28												
Dolmades Yialantzi	70	40	2	6	4.5	1	2.5	1	0	280	0	per piece, based on 55 pieces
Grilled Chicken Breasts, p. 32												
Island-Spiced Chicken Breasts	460	170	40	22	19	8	7	3	130	960	1	
Grilled Coffee-Brined Chicken Breasts	240	70	39	2	8	4	2	1	115	750	0	
Herbed Grilled Chicken	330	150	40	3	17	3	11	2	100	590	0	
Tex-Mex Chicken Under a Brick	420	210	41	8	23	3	16	2	100	600	2	
Tomato Salads, p. 37												
Tomato Salad w/Feta, Olives & Mint	230	170	6	11	19	6	10	2	25	760	2	based on 6 servings based on 8 servings based on 8 servings
Cherry Tomato Bread Salad w/Mozzarella	410	250	20	21	28	9	15	3	25	520	2	
Tomato, Avocado, Corn & Black Bean Salad	240	170	4	19	18	3	13	2	0	280	5	
Tomato & Green Bean Salad w/Prosciutto	120	70	5	9	8	1	5	1	5	520	3	
Tomato, Chive & Pine Nut Salad	220	140	6	17	15	4	8	2	15	510	3	
Grilled Shrimp, p. 43												
Salt & Pepper Crusted Shrimp w/Two Sauces	370	280	20	3	31	8	19	3	200	2150	1	based on 6 servings w/2 Tbs. sauce, w/o butter based on 6 servings w/o crackers
Grilled Old Bay Shrimp w/Lemony Horseradish	210	100	20	8	11	1	6	3	180	620	1	
Grilled Shrimp Margarita	250	140	12	13	15	2	10	2	90	420	4	
Granitas, p. 46												
Watermelon Granita	50	0	0	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	based on 8 servings
Pink Lemonade Granita	90	0	0	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Sangria Granita	60	0	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Strawberry-Balsamic Granita	50	0	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Mango-Lime Granita	50	0	0	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Antipasto Menu, p. 48												
Grilled Corn Salad w/Cherry Tomatoes	160	100	4	16	11	2	7	1	5	270	3	based on 8 servings
Chickpea, Calamari & Zucchini Salad	460	190	22	49	21	3	13	4	105	270	13	based on 10 servings
Roasted Chicken Salad w/Fennel & Olives	290	200	18	6	22	4	11	6	55	500	2	based on 10 servings
Prosciutto w/Marinated Melon	90	30	7	8	3.5	1	2	0.5	15	690	1	based on 10 servings
Grilled Eggplant Marinated w/Mint	170	150	1	5	16	2	12	1	0	240	2	based on 10 servings
Summer Berry Pudding w/Moscato Cream	280	80	4	47	9	5	2	1	25	180	6	based on 12 servings
Cold Soups, p. 54												
Chilled Curried Carrot Soup	150	70	5	17	8	4	3	1	15	330	4	
Cucumber-Yogurt Soup w/Avocado	260	190	6	15	21	4	13	2	10	530	4	
Chilled Beet Soup w/Horseradish Sour Cream	230	120	6	25	14	5	7	1	15	430	5	
Vinaigrettes, p. 58												
Classic Sherry Vinaigrette	90	90	0	0	10	1	7	1	0	80	0	per tablespoon
Spicy Ginger-Lime-Garlic Vinaigrette	60	60	0	1	7	1	1	5	0	80	0	per tablespoon
Raspberry-Thyme Vinaigrette	90	90	0	0	10	1	7	1	0	80	0	per tablespoon
Mellow Garlic & Basil Vinaigrette	100	90	0	2	10	1	7	1	0	80	0	per tablespoon
Mustard Vinaigrette	90	90	0	1	10	1	8	1	0	110	0	per tablespoon
Caesar-Style Vinaigrette	100	90	1	1	10	1	8	1	5	140	0	per tablespoon
Tomato-Ginger Vinaigrette	90	90	0	1	10	1	8	1	0	90	0	per tablespoon
Peach Desserts, p. 61												
Peach Cake w/Apricot & Vanilla Glaze	360	120	5	55	14	8	4	1	85	270	1	w/ ½ cup ice cream w/o whipping cream garnish
Peach-Ginger Galette w/Hazelnuts	400	190	5	49	21	11	7	1	50	230	2	
Pistachio Peach Sundaes in Phyllo Cups	370	170	7	48	19	9	7	2	45	190	4	
Peach Cobbler w/Star Anise	310	90	3	53	10	6	3	1	30	200	3	
From Our Test Kitchen, p. 66												
Spearmint Syrup	35	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	per tablespoon
Mojito	180	0	1	13	0	0	0	0	0	35	0	
Mayonnaise	120	120	0	0	14	2	10	1	15	240	0	per tablespoon
Quick & Delicious, p. 82C												
Spiced Salmon w/Yellow Pepper	430	220	44	8	24	4	12	7	120	580	2	based on 6 servings w/o feta or nuts
Chickpea, Carrot & Parsley Salad	250	130	5	25	15	2	10	2	0	630	5	
Broiled Ham Steak w/Sweet & Spicy Glaze	340	70	34	36	8	2	4	1	75	2260	0	
Crab & Avocado Salad	230	150	15	6	17	3	7	5	50	560	3	per first course serving
Grilled Sesame Chicken Wings	330	200	21	11	22	5	9	7	60	720	1	per appetizer serving
Lamb Skewers w/Green Olive & Mint Sauce	470	310	35	4	35	9	22	3	120	800	0	
Risotto w/Corn, Tomatoes & Basil	260	70	8	39	8	4	3	1	15	360	2	per side dish serving
Vanilla & Ginger Roasted Plum Compote	210	70	3	31	8	5	3	0	30	75	2	w/ ½ cup ice cream

The nutritional analyses have been calculated by a registered dietitian at The Food Consulting Company of San Diego, California. When a recipe gives a choice of ingredients, the first choice is the one used in the

calculations. Optional ingredients and those listed without a specific quantity are not included. When a range of ingredient amounts or servings is given, the smaller amount or portion is used. When the

quantity of salt and pepper aren't specified, the analysis is based on ¼ teaspoon salt and ⅛ teaspoon pepper per serving for entrées, and ⅛ teaspoon salt and ⅛ teaspoon pepper per serving for side dishes.

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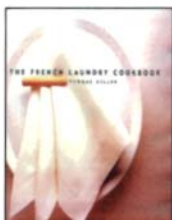
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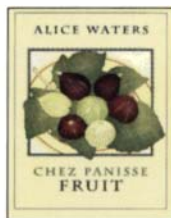
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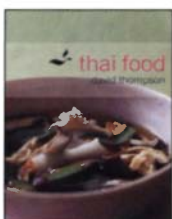
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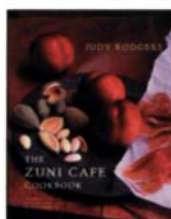
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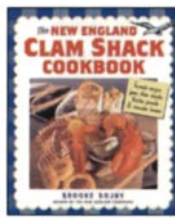
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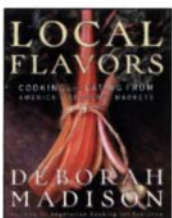
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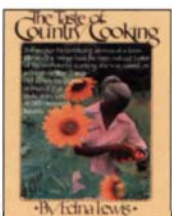
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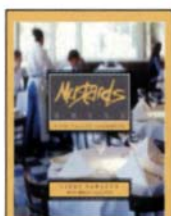
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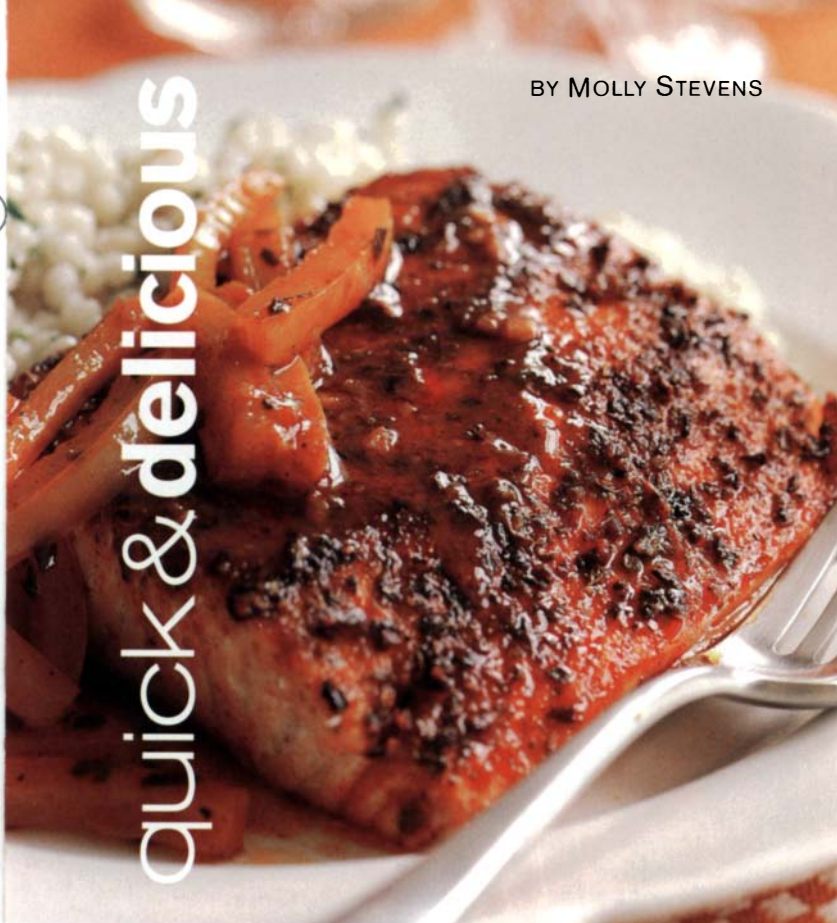
Eastern Native Seed Conservancy in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, is dedicated to making sure that regional, heirloom vegetable varieties endure. And although the Conservancy gathers seeds and propagates many types of plants, tomatoes are a specialty. Lawrence Davis-Hollander, who runs the project, says some varieties, like King Humbert, can be traced as far back as the late 1700s. "That's pretty old, considering that tomatoes weren't an everyday foodstuff here until around the Civil War," he says.

Lawrence tends and tracks about ninety varieties with equal care, but he does have his favorites. White Queen is the best-tasting white variety, he contends, while Indian Moon is the tastiest orange tomato. He's partial to White Currant for its almost maply sweetness, and calls Aunt Ruby's German Green "my answer to Green Zebra," a fairly recent variety.

Fostering the connection between people and plants is the Seed Conservancy's main mission. But the hard work provides lots of pleasure, too. Says Lawrence, "What better way is there to promote conservation than preserving diverse colors, textures, and flavors that are great to look at and to eat?"

—Amy Albert, senior editor ♦





Spiced Salmon with Yellow Peppers

Serves two.

1 tsp. minced garlic
1 tsp. dried oregano
1 tsp. paprika
½ tsp. ground cumin
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1½ Tbs. olive oil
¾ lb. salmon fillet (skin on), cut into two pieces
1 small yellow bell pepper, cored, seeded, and cut into ¼-inch strips
¼ cup fresh orange juice

In a small bowl, combine the garlic, oregano, paprika, cumin, ½ tsp. salt, and a couple of grinds of pepper. Spoon out a heaping ½ tsp. of this spice mix and set aside. Stir 1 tsp. of the oil into the remaining mix to make a paste. Pat dry the salmon fillets and rub the paste on the top of the fish (but not on the skin side); set aside.

Heat 2 tsp. of the oil in a nonstick skillet over medium heat. Pile in the bell pepper strips and sauté, stirring or tossing a

few times, until they begin to brown and soften, 8 to 10 minutes. Remove and set aside. Return the pan to medium-high heat. Pour in the remaining 1½ tsp. oil; when it's hot, set the salmon in the pan, spiced side down, and sear for 3 to 4 minutes. Flip the fillets, cover the pan, and cook until the salmon is done to your liking (4 to 5 minutes for medium); make a slit in the center of the fillet to check. Transfer the salmon to serving plates and return the pan to high heat. Add the sautéed pepper, orange juice, and reserved spice mix and cook, stirring a few times, until the juice is reduced to a syrupy consistency, 3 to 4 minutes. Spoon the pepper strips and juices over the salmon and serve.

Serving suggestion: Serve with jasmine rice or orzo tossed with herbs.



Lamb Skewers with Green Olive & Mint Sauce

Serves two as a main dish.

¾ lb. boneless lamb shoulder chops or lamb leg steaks, trimmed of extra fat and cut into 1-inch cubes
3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
1 tsp. minced garlic
1 tsp. ground cumin
Pinch crushed red chile flakes
Kosher salt
2 tsp. red-wine vinegar
1 tsp. honey
2 Tbs. chopped pitted green olives
2 Tbs. chopped fresh mint leaves

In a medium bowl, combine the lamb with 1 Tbs. of the olive oil, ½ tsp. of the garlic, ½ tsp. of the cumin, the chile flakes, and ½ tsp. salt. Toss to coat and set aside.

Prepare a hot grill fire or heat the broiler on high with the top oven rack set so the broiler pan will be 2 to 3 inches away from the element.

In a small bowl, combine the vinegar, honey, olives, and the remaining garlic, cumin, and olive oil. Stir in the mint.

Thread the lamb onto 4 small skewers. Broil or grill the lamb, flipping once, until browned and sizzling, 3 to 4 minutes per side. Transfer the skewers to plates, spoon over the sauce, and serve immediately.

Serving suggestion: Serve over couscous or rice pilaf.

tip

❖ If using wooden skewers, soak them for 20 minutes in water before threading so they don't burn on the grill.



Risotto with Corn, Tomatoes & Basil

Serves three as a main dish; six as a side dish.

4 cups low-salt chicken broth
3 ears corn, shucked and cleaned of any silk
2 Tbs. unsalted butter or olive oil
1 shallot or small onion, minced
1 cup arborio rice
1/3 cup dry white wine
1 cup chopped plum or cherry tomatoes
2 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
3 Tbs. torn fresh basil leaves
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1/3 cup freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano

Heat the broth in a pot or saucepan large enough to fit the corn over medium-low heat to just below a simmer. Simmer the corn in the broth for 4 minutes and transfer to a plate; reserve the broth and keep it hot. Using a chef's knife, slice the corn kernels off the cob into a large bowl (you should have about 1 1/4 cups).

In a heavy-based deep skillet or wide saucepan, melt the butter (or heat the oil) over medium heat. Add the shallot or onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until it's translucent, about

2 minutes. Add the rice and stir until the grains are well coated with butter or oil. Pour in the wine, stir, and cook until the wine is absorbed, about 1 minute.

Ladle in about 1 1/2 cups of the hot broth, and cook, stirring occasionally, until absorbed, 3 to 5 minutes. Continue adding broth in 1/2-cup increments, stirring and simmering until it's absorbed each time, at intervals of about 3 to 5 minutes.

While the rice is simmering, combine the tomatoes, extra-virgin olive oil, and 2 Tbs. of the basil in a small bowl. Season with salt and pepper and set aside.

When the rice is just barely tender, after about 16 minutes, stir in the corn. Continue adding more stock and stirring until the rice is creamy but still firm to the tooth, 20 to 25 minutes total. Remove from the heat, fold in the Parmigiano and then the tomato-basil mixture. Top each serving with the remaining basil and serve immediately.



Vanilla & Ginger Roasted Plum Compote

Serves six.

6 ripe but firm black or red plums
Butter for the baking dish
3 to 4 Tbs. granulated sugar
1 tsp. grated lemon zest
1 Tbs. fresh lemon juice
1 Tbs. rum, preferably dark
1 1/2 tsp. pure vanilla extract
1/2 tsp. grated fresh ginger
Pinch salt
Vanilla ice cream for serving

tip

❖ For a smooth, delicate vanilla flavor, replace the vanilla extract with the same amount of vanilla bean paste (see *Where to Buy It*, p. 76).

Heat the oven to 425°F. Cut the plums in half, discard the pits, and slice the halved plums into four wedges each. Generously butter an 8x11-inch baking dish (or one just large enough to hold the plums).

In a mixing bowl, toss the plums with 3 Tbs. of the sugar, the lemon zest, lemon juice, rum, vanilla, ginger, and salt. Toss well. Taste one of the plum wedges; if it's still tart, sprinkle in the remaining 1 Tbs. sugar. Pour into the baking dish and roast, gently stirring occasionally, until the plums are tender and juicy, 10 to 20 minutes. Don't overcook them or they'll fall apart.

Let the plums cool for at least 5 minutes or up to an hour before serving. Serve the plums hot or warm with vanilla ice cream and spoon the juices over the top.



Grilled Sesame Chicken Wings

Serves six as an appetizer.

- 2½ to 3 lb. chicken wings**
(about 12 whole wings)
- ½ cup hoisin sauce**
- 3 Tbs. toasted sesame oil**
- 2 Tbs. rice wine vinegar**
- 2 Tbs. soy sauce**
- 1 Tbs. grated fresh ginger**
- 1½ tsp. Tabasco or other hot sauce**
- 2 cloves garlic, minced and smashed into a paste using the side of a chef's knife**
- ½ tsp. ground cloves**
- 1 Tbs. sesame seeds, preferably toasted**

Heat a gas grill to medium high or prepare a medium-hot charcoal fire. With a chef's knife, cut off the wing tips; discard or save

tip

❖ The wings can be roasted in a 400°F oven on a broiler pan on the center rack. They take about the same amount of time to cook but won't get quite as crisp.

for stock. Separate the remaining wing pieces by cutting through the joint. Transfer to a large bowl.

In a small bowl, combine the hoisin sauce, sesame oil, vinegar, soy sauce, ginger, Tabasco, garlic, and cloves. Whisk to combine and spoon out 2 Tbs. to set aside. Pour the remaining sauce over the chicken wings and toss to coat.

Grill the wings, basting for the first 15 minutes with any sauce left in the bowl and turning with tongs every 5 minutes or so to prevent burning. (If the wings start to burn, turn the heat down to medium or move them to a cooler part of the grill.) Continue to grill until all the wings are very dark, slightly crisp, and cooked through, 20 to 25 minutes total. Transfer the wings to a clean bowl, drizzle on the reserved sauce, sprinkle on the sesame seeds, toss to coat, and serve immediately with plenty of napkins.



Chickpea, Carrot & Parsley Salad

Serves four to six as a vegetarian main dish; eight as a side dish.

- 19-oz. can chickpeas, drained and rinsed**
(about 2 cups)
- 1 cup loosely packed fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves, very coarsely chopped**
- 1 cup loosely packed shredded carrot** (from about 1 large carrot)
- ½ cup sliced radishes** (about 6 medium)
- ½ cup chopped scallions, white and green parts** (about 4)
- 3 Tbs. fresh lemon juice**
- 1 tsp. ground coriander**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- 6 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**
- ⅓ cup crumbled feta cheese or toasted pine nuts** (optional)

tip

❖ To make ahead, combine the salad ingredients and make the dressing, but don't mix until ready to serve.

Put ½ cup of the chickpeas in a mixing bowl and mash them into a coarse paste with a potato masher or large wooden spoon. Toss in the remaining chickpeas along with the parsley, carrot, radishes, and scallions. Stir to combine.

In a liquid measuring cup, whisk together the lemon juice, coriander, ½ tsp. salt, and a few generous grinds of black pepper. Continue whisking while adding the olive oil in a slow stream. Pour over the salad and toss gently. Season the salad with salt and pepper to taste. Top with the feta or pine nuts, if using, and serve immediately.

Serving suggestion: Serve with warmed pita bread, sliced into wedges.



Broiled Ham Steak with a Sweet & Spicy Rosemary Glaze

Serves two.

- ¾ to 1 lb. ham steak, ½ to ¾ inch thick**
- ⅓ cup orange marmalade**
- 1 Tbs. cider vinegar**
- 1½ tsp. chopped fresh rosemary**
- ½ tsp. dry mustard**
- ½ tsp. soy sauce**
- Pinch crushed red chile flakes**

Arrange an oven rack so a broiler pan will be able to sit 2 to 3 inches away from the element and heat the broiler on high (or prepare a hot charcoal or gas grill fire).

Pat the ham steak dry with paper towels and set on the broiler pan (or on a plate for transferring to the grill). In a small saucepan, combine the marmalade, vinegar, rosemary, mustard, soy sauce, and chile flakes. Bring to a simmer over medium heat and cook, whisking to combine, for 2 to 3 minutes. Keep warm. Brush one side of the ham with the glaze and broil (or grill) until the glaze is bubbling and browned, 4 to 5 minutes. Flip, brush on the remaining glaze, and cook the other side for another 4 to 5 minutes. Serve immediately.



Crab & Avocado Salad

Serves four as a first course; two for lunch.

- 3 Tbs. mayonnaise**
- 2 Tbs. buttermilk**
- ½ tsp. grated lemon zest**
- 2 tsp. fresh lemon juice; more for sprinkling**
- ½ tsp. Dijon mustard**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black or white pepper**
- 8 oz. crabmeat, preferably lump, picked over to remove bits of shell**
- ½ cup finely chopped celery from the inner ribs and leaves**
- 3 Tbs. chopped fresh chives (½-inch pieces)**
- 1 ripe avocado, peeled, pitted, and cut into ¾-inch pieces**
- 1 head Boston or Bibb lettuce, washed (for lining the plates)**

In a small bowl, whisk the mayonnaise, buttermilk, lemon zest, lemon juice, and mustard. Season with salt and pepper to taste. In a medium bowl, mix the crabmeat, celery, and 2 Tbs. of the chives. Fold in the dressing gently so

as not to break up the crabmeat. Gently fold in the avocado. Taste for salt and pepper. Line four salad plates with lettuce leaves, heap a scoop of the crab salad on each, and garnish with the remaining chives. Sprinkle each serving with ½ tsp. lemon juice and serve.

tips

- ❖ For the best flavor, use fresh, nonpasteurized crabmeat. You can substitute cooked and thinly sliced shrimp or lobster for the crabmeat.
- ❖ If you don't have buttermilk, substitute sour cream and add a teaspoon of water or so to thin the dressing, or use heavy cream and add an extra few drops of lemon juice.